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poor nations; to debate and campaign for the
radical changes necessary within and between
those nations if the basic material and spiritual
needs of all are to be met; and to bring to life
the people, the ideas and the action in the fight
for world development.

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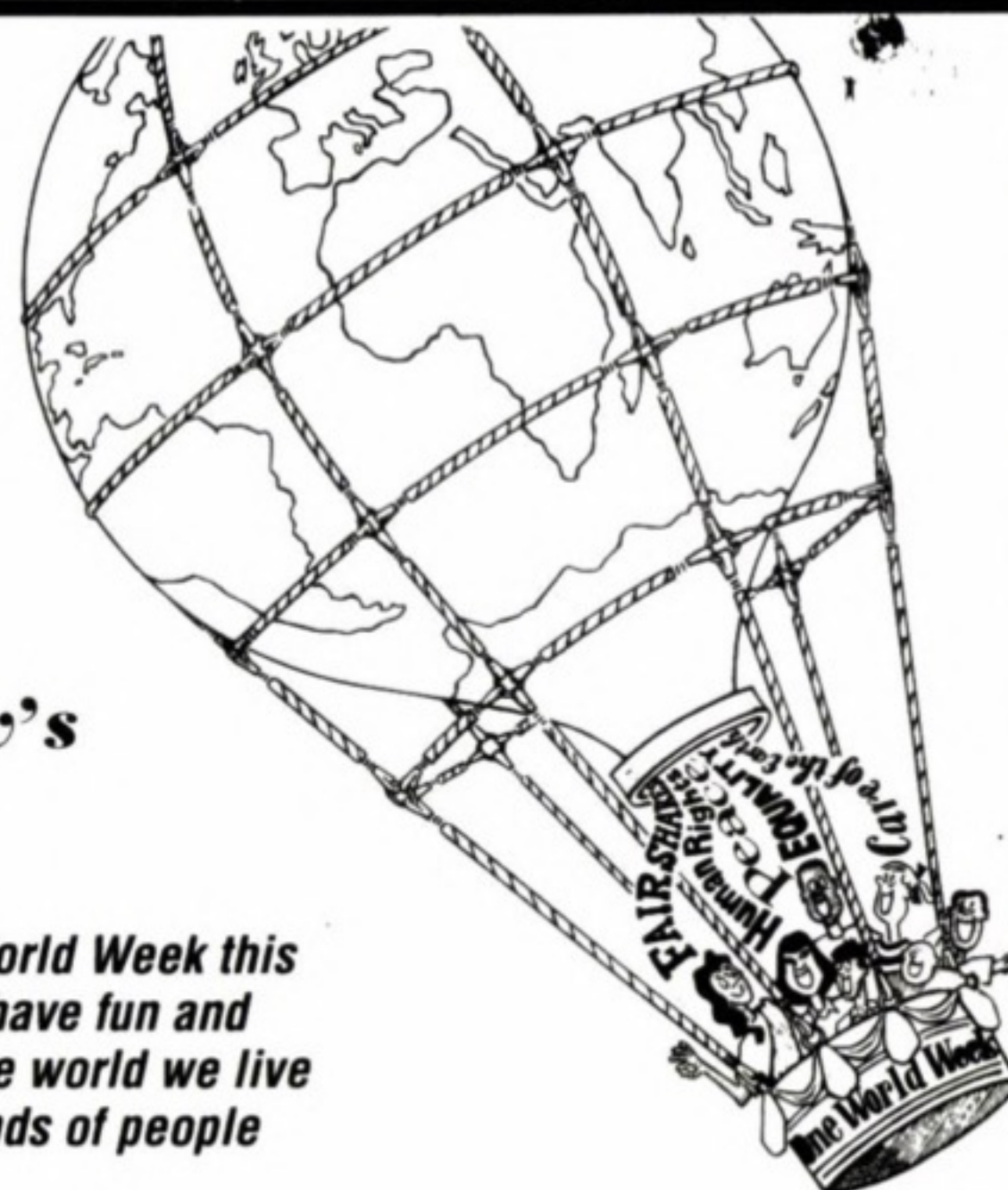
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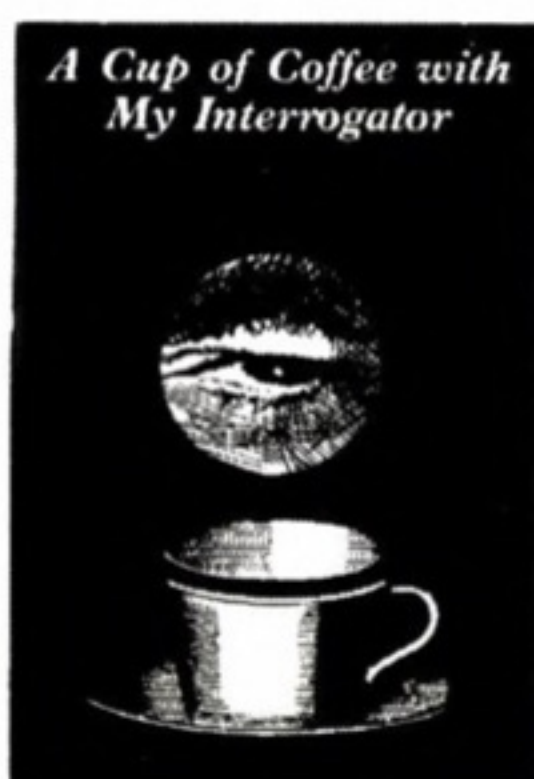
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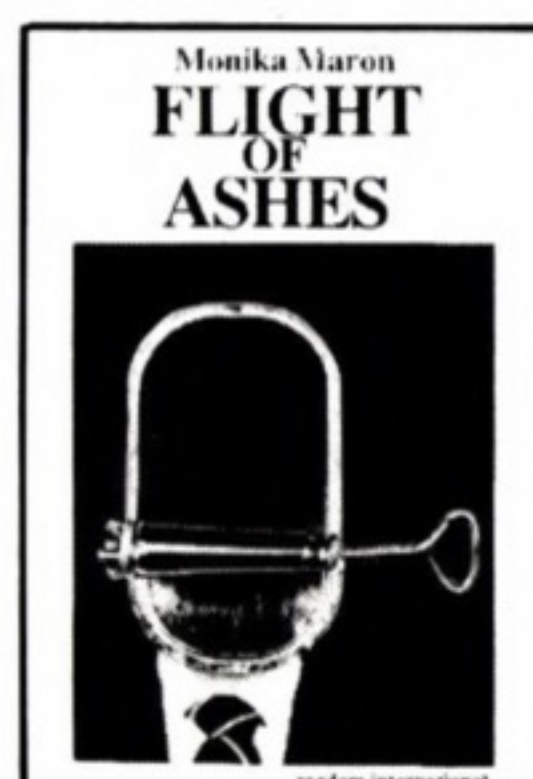
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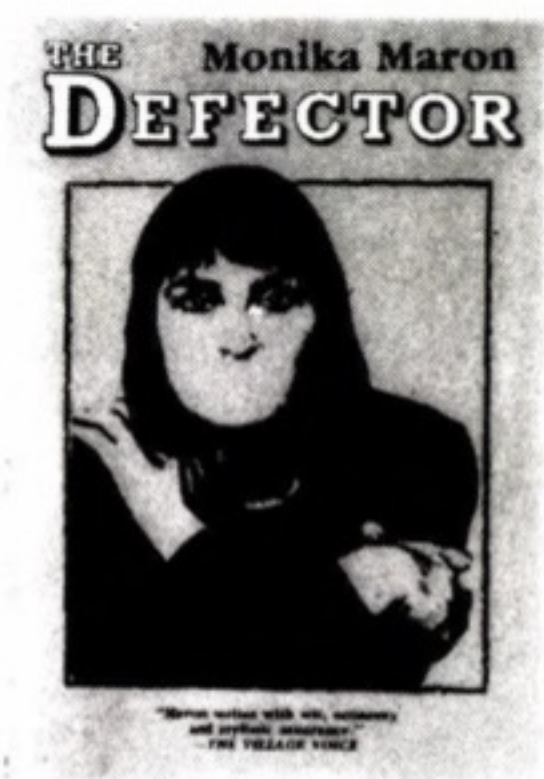
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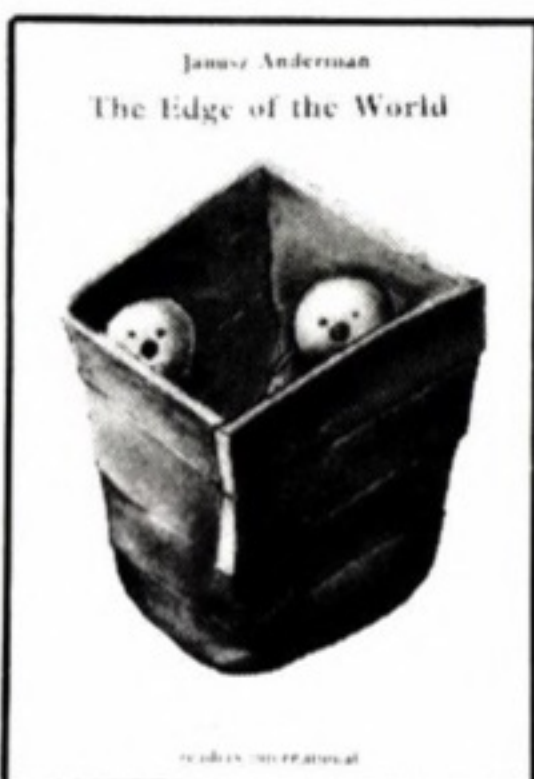
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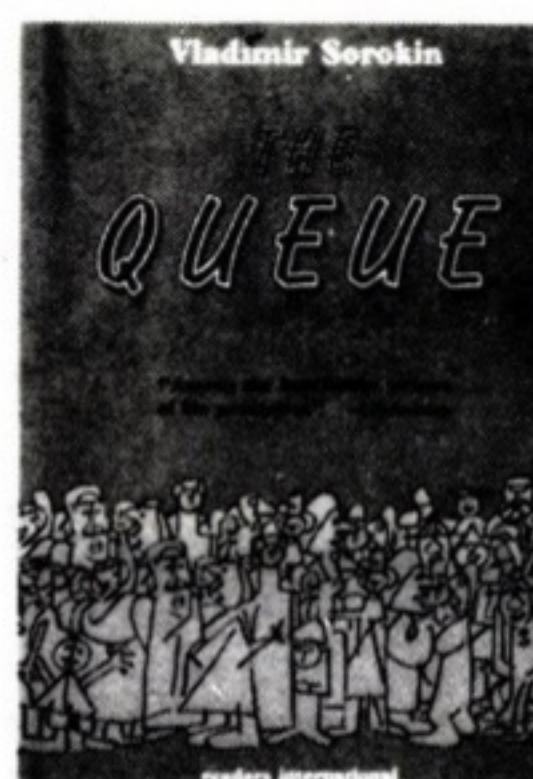
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THE characters are stereotypes... 'Yes...?'

'Could you make them a bit more real? Easier to identify with? What about using photos of Germans celebrating the Berlin Wall coming down?'

The telephone conversation was with Hector Cattolica, the Paris-based Argentinian illustrator who designed this **NI** front cover. The subject: the 'rough' designs he had sent.

He thought about my comments, then sent his reply. It took the form of a three-page long fax. 'I recognize that the characters I used are, in a sense, stereotypes,' he argued. 'But they are also archetypes which, as Jung would say, correspond to the great themes of the collective unconscious. In this case: wealth.'

He continued: 'The image is not an illustration of what happened in Berlin last year but a reflection in symbolic form of the consequences of the uniting of the North, seen by me, a man of the South. It might not be seen that way by you...'

Not much you could say to that.

Except send back a fax saying 'OK, you win,' or words to that effect, and ponder a while upon the wonders of modern communications technology. Here we were, designer and editor, working in different countries yet able to engage in that delicate negotiation between image-maker and word-monger, between the symbolic and the literal, between the perceptions of the Southerner and those of the Northerner, almost as though we were leaning over the same drawing board.

Those involved in Eastern Europe's revolutions have also had cause to appreciate communications technology. The hectic pace of those events was made possible by the fact that Eastern Europeans could get up-to-the-minute news about what was happening in their own and neighbouring countries by picking up Western TV or radio broadcasts.

It is not therefore surprising that Western media moguls are looking to corner the market in the East. The control of such power to influence in the hands of a few Western media networks is worrying. It underlines the responsibility that independent publishers have to provide a viewpoint that is radically different. This issue of **NI** tries to do this – by looking at how the raising of the Iron Curtain affects people in the Third World.

During the course of my research I became aware that the people I was being referred to – those who were prepared to speculate on global matters and those who presented themselves as possible writers were almost exclusively white and male. This is to be expected. The powerful and the privileged feel at ease with discussing 'the world'. It is, after all, their domain. But I opted deliberately to chart another course, with the result that this magazine is written almost entirely by writers from the South and by women writers. Has this policy had an impact on the content and feel of the magazine? Maybe. But certainly not as much as I had hoped.

The fact remains that whatever your perspective, if you write about the people who shape world events you are inevitably focussing on an elite group of white men. This is the world in which we live... and it will take a hell of a lot more than editorial strategies to change it.

Vanessa Baird

Vanessa Baird
for the New Internationalist Co-operative

CONTENTS

NI No. 211

THIS MONTH'S THEME

SEPTEMBER 1990

SPARKS FROM EASTERN EUROPE



East meets West, North forgets South 4

Vanessa Baird explains why the end of the Cold War could cost the Third World dear.

A tale of two cities 8

Kabul and Peshawar. Behrouz Afagh shuttles between the opposing camps in Afghanistan's devastating civil war.

VIEWPOINT: CONFLICTS

Action replay 10

A fast rewind through a year's events that have changed the shape of the world.

Black in the USSR 12

The end of Stalinism has opened a can of racist worms in the former Soviet

bloc, according to Tajudeen Abdul Raheem.

VIEWPOINT: RACE

Disobedient domino 14

Mandy Macdonald asks whether Castro and Cuba can withstand the anti-communist tide.

VIEWPOINT: ENEMIES

EAST AND SOUTH – THE FACTS 16

The human factor 18

Only the best-behaved African countries will now get aid. But Rakiya Omaar and Richard Carver question the criteria.

VIEWPOINT: AID



Perishtroika, mon amour 20

Kishu Singh and Dilip Bobb argue that peace in the North could mean war in the South.

VIEWPOINT: ARMS

The Dollar Quadrille 21

An iron-curtain raising song with apologies to Lewis Carroll.

Simply... Sparks from Eastern Europe – where will they fall 22

The Dalai Lama and the Playwright 24

Tibet has suffered a clampdown in the last year – but found new friends in Eastern Europe. Catriona Bass reports.

VIEWPOINT: ALLIES

Letters 2

Letter from La Paz 3

Update 26

Endpiece: by Helena Paul 29

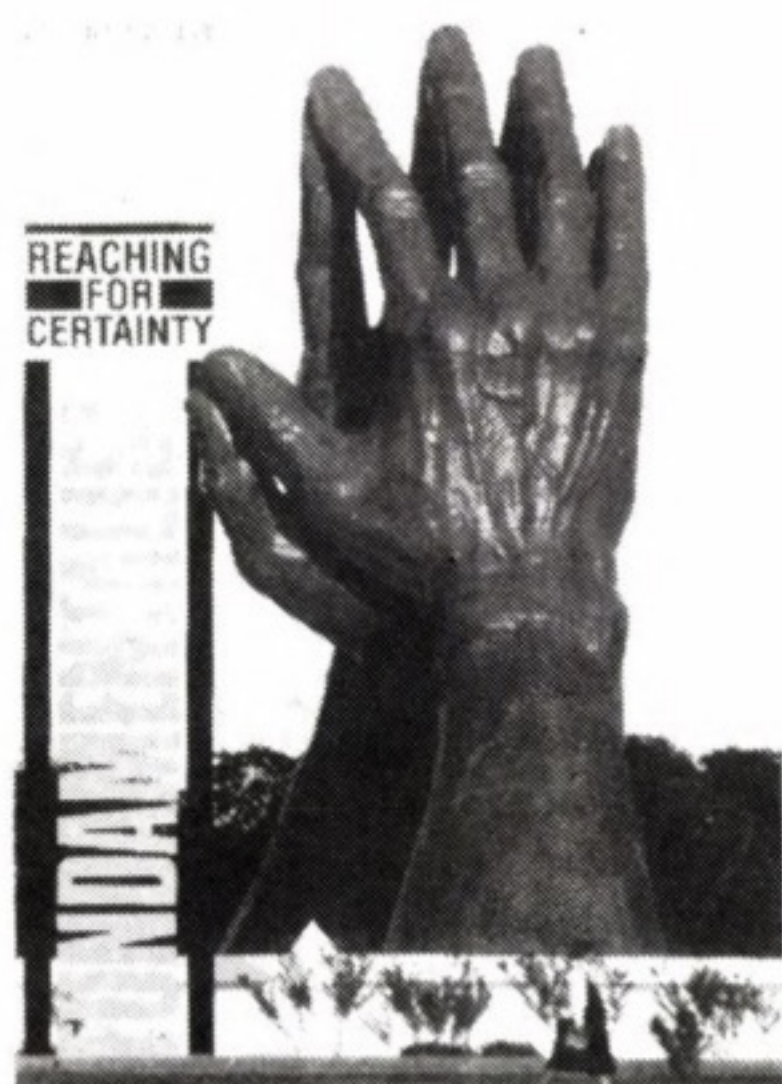
Reviews: including Barry Hines classic 30

Country profile: Bangladesh 32

Front cover illustration: Hector Cattolica

Fundamental disagreement

I was disappointed that your latest issue (*Fundamentalism* NI 210) did not defend Salman Rushdie. It is outrageous that he should fear for his life because a group of extremists disagree with



ideas he has expressed in a book. Whether or not you agree with his ideas is irrelevant: he has the right to express them. Free speech is our main defence against fundamentalism because it means the right to ask questions, to explore new ideas, to value diversity.

Yet even in the West our freedom to speak our minds is being eroded by constraints on the press, legalized phone-tapping etc. Freedom is not a gift, but a prize that must be fought for. And free speech can only be won if we constantly, collectively and publicly assert our right to it. For this reason we all have an obligation to defend Salman Rushdie. And I am surprised to find that the NI is not in the front line.

Jane Freud
Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK

Exploiting exotica

July's edition (NI 209) carried an advertisement for a magazine called *The Adventurers, travelling the world independently*, which made me feel extremely uncomfortable. 'We don't only bring you the personal stories of British adventurers, we bring you tales of France, Spain, Germany or Italy,' says the publicity. It makes

NI welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

'tempting offers' like a cash discount or a free bush jacket, so that 'for a few pounds a year you can become part of the adventurous crowd'. 'This,' they say, 'is a far better way to relax than lying on your back and roasting on the beach.' Is it? The impression I get is of a Eurocentric view which sees the world's people as potential 'exotica' for an elite to exploit.

Lucy Mackentin
Newtown, Devon, UK

Deadly delusion

David Gibson's letter (*Letters* NI 209) stating that nuclear power is the only practical and safe solution to the energy crisis is blatant misinformation. Nuclear power – already demonstrated as unclean, unsafe and inefficient – is still publicized as a viable energy source only because it keeps political and economic power centralized in the hands of a few and makes a lot of money for them. It is inextricably linked to the sick military-industrial complex.

And what are we to do with the lethal wastes it produces? I urge interested readers to look at Fritjof Capra's book *The Turning Point*. This shows that the technology already exists to supply the world with safe, renewable energy. But it will not be used unless enough people become aware of this fact.

Rob Preston
Nottingham, UK

Hard lesson

Thank you for printing Naomi Roberts' article about her experience of being a volunteer (*Endpiece* NI 209). Although my experience in the Maldives during 1984 and 1985 was different, many of her comments struck a chord. For me the positive aspect of VSO was that it raised my consciousness and made me realise that the problems of the Third World are situated in the First World. Learning this at first hand was 'extremely painful and left me feeling very negative about myself. Perhaps the way to view it is that the real contribution we make is not so much what we do overseas, but what we subsequently do at home or abroad?

Valerie Miller
Newbury Park, UK

Breaking out

I enjoyed reading your issue on *The fear of madness* (NI 209) and applaud your attempt to confront this fear which lies at the heart of social life. Madness is the potential we all possess for breaking through rigid barriers of conformity that make us suppress our emotions and harm our well-being. It can provide deep insights into life and be a powerful force for healing, by releasing blocked energy. We don't need to eliminate it so much, as to integrate it into ourselves, instead of walling it off in our minds or in mental hospitals. The more we are

able to accept madness as a creative part of ourselves, the less extreme its expression.

Donnard White
London, UK

Catch 22

On reading your issue about madness I learned that NI has reached the same conclusions as I have about mental illness, but I didn't get much further in finding out about psychosis (*Fear of madness* NI 209). Every time it was mentioned the writer said, 'for example schizophrenia' or 'like schizophrenia'. I know schizophrenia is a psychosis, but what else is? Also nobody seems quite sure what schizophrenia is – except it is a psychosis. All I can determine is that when you feel desperate but are still keeping your head together, you can said to be neurotic; but when distress engulfs you utterly, you are probably psychotic.

Penelope Wilcock
St Leonards-On-Sea, UK

Burden of guilt

In his article *Guns, idiots and screams* George Ayittey condemns African elites for destroying Africa (*Africa in the 1990s*, NI 208). But the faults he accuses them of are just as prevalent in the West. What multinational gives a percentage of its profits to peasants? How many Western millionaires distribute their wealth equitably? And who is to blame for the deaths of 800,000 people in Uganda – Idi Amin or the Western arms producers who made their fortunes selling him guns? The guilt is ours. For the Idi Amins of Africa were trained in our Western military academies. And our entire lives are founded on the immense benefits which the West has accrued from unfair trading with Africa over the years.

Sally Feather
Guildford, UK

Silent crisis

I was disappointed that your issue on *Africa in the 1990s* (NI 208) did not mention the Western Saharans who have been struggling since 1975 to liberate their country from colonial occupation by



Morocco. The indigenous population of Western Sahara – the Saharawi – are either in exile or living under a vicious colonial regime. With the winds of change blowing in the southern part of the African continent is it not time that the conflict in Western Sahara started to attract some attention?

Mark Luetchford
London, UK

Class prejudice

I was appalled to learn that in your view (*Reviews NI 207*), racism directed at middle class, professional people is somehow more shameful and disgraceful than racism directed against ordinary people who may be a different colour and from a different class.

This 'selective racism' accords ill beside your claimed solidarity with the Third World, few of whose

people belong to the class that NI staffers obviously feel more comfortable among.

Anne Buchanan
Raumati, Aotearoa

Grow power

We must stop relying on large-scale systems – particularly agricultural ones – to alleviate the earth's ills. Instead we should emphasise small-scale, decentralized ventures – like growing food in and around buildings. Buildings can be heat traps, windbreaks, trellises and so on. A totally new approach towards organizing society is to integrate dwellings, plants, animals, financial and legal systems so that power becomes decentralized and is once more in the hands of the people.

Jude and Michael Fanton
(The Seed Savers' Trust)
Nimbin, Australia

Simply silly

For years I waited for your *Country profiles* to include Australia, UK, US, France, Spain and the USSR to name but a few. Now I notice that you are updating those countries you have already covered. Is this because you have somehow managed to draw an imaginary line between so-called 'developed' and 'developing' countries? Or is it really because to include them would betray, to your readers, the meaninglessness of trying to profile their own countries? For instance, how would you hide the enormous difference between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people in the 'At a Glance' section for Australia? What photograph would you use to depict Australian people? You put the rest of the world in the 'too hard basket' and continue to build on our stereotypes

of countries we are not too familiar with.

Phil Richards
Marrickville, Australia

Ed: We debated whether to profile readers' countries but decided against it: the purpose of the section was always to give readers a thumbnail sketch of Third World countries they might otherwise never read about. We could never offer more than a glimpse in such a short space but would certainly hope to challenge stereotypes.

Alternative view

I was disappointed that *How to turn down the heat* (NI 206) did not mention the Centre for Alternative Technology at Machynlleth, Wales, where a variety of wind- and solar-powered energy systems are on display.

Margaret Lawrence
Newark, UK



The views expressed on the letters pages are not necessarily those of the NI.

LETTER FROM LA PAZ

Pills and politics

Susanna Rance explains why botched abortions beat birth control in Bolivia.

BEEN to the birth-control clinic lately? Most Bolivians would think you were mad if you have. In 1968 *The Blood of the Condor*, a film by Bolivian director Sanjines, dramatized reports of indigenous women being forcibly sterilized. Since then 'birth control' has been associated with coercive programmes aimed at cutting the population's birth rate. Churchpeople and left-wingers insist that the country needs a bigger population and that contraception is irrelevant to most people.

The notion of voluntary family planning has only recently come into vogue and few people have information about it, let alone access to modern contraceptive methods. However, curiosity on the matter is growing. Questions like 'How old are you?', 'Are you married?' and 'Have you got children?' are often followed these days by 'Why not?' or 'What do you do to stop having more kids?'

My 20-year-old niece, Esperanza, is the eldest of six children, brought up in a traditional mould. 'My mother was worried when I started going out with my first boyfriend,' says Esperanza. 'But she never told me why. "Just you be careful, now..." was the only advice she ever gave me.'

Esperanza, herself born when her mother was single, now struggles to work, study and bring up a three-year-old daughter on her own. 'My friends and I all wanted to be mothers some day,' she told me, 'and we heard that the Pill could cause all kinds of problems. Anyway we were too embarrassed to see a doctor about that sort of thing. Natural methods sounded better to us, but we weren't too successful with them...'

While fear and rumour still surround the idea of contraception, Bolivian women have the highest birth rate in Latin America, with six children as the national average. But times are changing. Nowadays, urban women are choosing to have one child less than their counterparts did a decade ago. In the city of La Paz, four kids are now the

norm, compared with eight in isolated rural Pando. With no national family-planning programme yet in existence, how do they manage it?

The answer lies mainly in backstreet abortion, which is an increasingly common way of limiting family size. In a recent survey half the women interviewed admitted to having terminated at least one pregnancy. 'One of my friends got pregnant three times,' remembers Esperanza. 'We used to go with her to the doctor's and take her home afterwards... she was really depressed. But we never gave a thought to how she could have avoided the situation... we just took it as a matter of course.' The cheaper the operation, the higher the cost to health: half of the country's gynaecological wards are occupied by patients suffering the consequences of botched abortions.

'We started to get more and more women coming to us who'd had their health damaged that way,' recalls Rosalia Castro, a community nurse I talked to in the mining town of Potosi. 'We got so many cases that we started offering sex education and then both men and women asked for family-planning services. We were a bit nervous about providing contraception as there's been so much trouble about it in the past. But in the end we couldn't just shut our eyes to the need for it.'

Many people claim abortion is just an urban problem but traditional healer Juliana Poma told me of her experiences in the rural communities where she collects medicinal plants and dispenses herbal remedies: 'When I see women who've had lots of children,' she says, 'I advise them, "You should take care, your body is getting worn out". But they just cover their faces and giggle, they don't want to listen. Then they mess themselves up taking really strong infusions or going to doctors who get rid of their babies with injections and things like that.'

'They get infections and then they come to me and say, "I'm bleeding, it won't stop, what shall I do?" I tell them, "You should take care beforehand, not afterwards. Sometimes they can't even walk. Some of them do it because they have too many children. Others don't want any kids at all. That's how it goes... Then there are women who can't get pregnant. Their husbands say, "What's the point of me working? Why should I live with you? If we can't have kids we might as well separate." It's a real shame. That's not the kind of problem that should be allowed to spoil people's lives – having kids or not having them.'

Susanna Rance has lived and worked in Bolivia for several years.



**Vanessa Baird explains
why the end of the
Cold War could cost the
Third World dear.**

EAST MEETS WEST

NORTH FORGETS SOUTH



THE German tourists were sitting outside a boulevard cafe, sipping beers and relaxing in the oblique golden glow of an autumn sun. Suddenly a man with a small black beard and a large white smile sauntered across and gave the nearest tourist a slap on the back.

'Congratulations! Congratulations!'

The tourist smiled in a bemused but friendly way. Her friends looked on non-plussed.

'You've done it. You've got rid of that Wall,' the man explained. 'I'm from Brazil... but I feel so happy for Europe today. Well, for the world...'

The Berlin Wall had started coming down that morning. A long collective nightmare seemed to be coming to an end. It was impossible not to feel elated. This very special breakthrough appeared to open up a new era of peace. One could dream of Cold War nuclear arsenals fading into the mists of history. One hardly dared believe it.

A few metro stops from the cafe was the Avenue d'Iena and the Paris branch of the World Bank. This was the setting for an international conference on world development media organized by the United Nations.

We – about 60 journalists from many different countries – spent the two days discussing everything from ideology to marketing. But our central concern was: how do you get people to care about what is happening on the other side of the world? How do you make it relevant to

their lives? What we wanted people to care about, of course, was global injustice and inequality – and inevitably there were attacks on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (in whose comfortable seats we were awkwardly sitting).

But in the evenings the talk kept drifting back to the events that were so dramatically unfolding a few hundred miles away in Eastern Europe. We were as excited as anyone by the changes – but we had a sneaking suspicion that the Third World was going to lose out as a result.

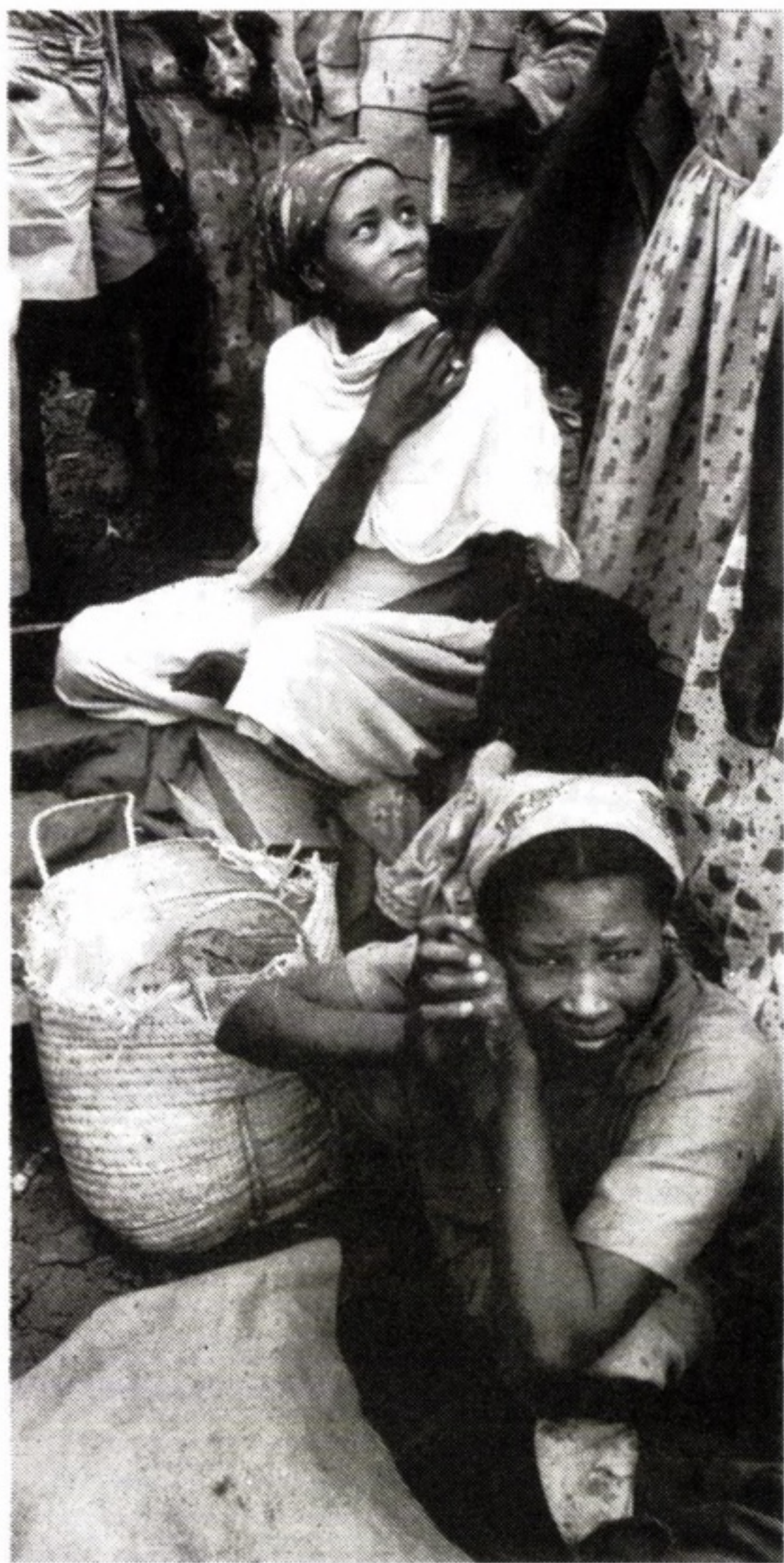
The sparks from Eastern Europe have begun to land in the Third World. For most Westerners the Cold War conjured up visions of ranged missiles facing each

on either side of the Iron Curtain. But it was in the Third World that the Cold War was actually fought – in Vietnam and Korea, Cambodia and Ethiopia, Nicaragua and Afghanistan, to name but a few sad locations.

Superpower backing in local conflicts not only prolonged war – it also gave tyrants the power to commit atrocities against their own populations with relative impunity. So one effect of the international thaw can only be good for the Third World: the superpowers are beginning to withdraw support from some of their most repellent allies.

Breaking ties of blood

In Ethiopia, for instance, the Soviet bloc has been winding down its support for the hated dictator Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. He it was who organized lavish celebrations in Addis Ababa (for the Revolution's anniversary) at the height of the 1984 famine. His policies have included bombing emergency aid supplies because rebel groups might gain political credit from distributing food to starving people. Up to now the USSR has always turned a blind eye to his excesses, concerned only to maintain a foothold in the Horn of Africa. But now East Germany, which set up and maintained Ethiopia's elaborate security apparatus, has withdrawn entirely and the Soviet Union plans not to renew its agreement to supply military equipment. Mengistu – who has survived nine assassination attempts – is hard



Waiting for an end to Ethiopia's civil war.

pushed to find other foreign suppliers, apart from Israel.

The US, for its part, has suddenly withdrawn support for the rebel coalition in Cambodia, led in all but name by Pol Pot's dreaded Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge was responsible for the extermination of one million Cambodian citizens during its reign of terror in the 1970s – a story chillingly retold in the feature film *The Killing Fields*. The US was prepared to back 'Asia's Hitler' because its hatred for the country that overthrew Pol Pot – Soviet-backed Vietnam – was even greater. Vietnamese troops finally withdrew from Cambodia last year, leaving the Government of Hun Sen in precarious power. Last month however, just as Khmer Rouge troops seemed poised to seize control of Cambodia again, the US announced that it no longer recognized the rebel coalition and would open a dialogue with Vietnam.

The shifting sands of the post-Cold War world have made life dangerously unpredictable for Third World leaders who do not have a base of popular support. They can no longer exploit Cold War rivalries and cannot rely upon superpower support when they put down domestic rebellions.

But there is a flip side to the end-of-the-War euphoria. Ironically the superpowers' agreement about things is causing many Third World people even greater concern than the conflict did.

There is an old African saying that

goes: 'When elephants fight it is the grass that suffers'. It was commonly used to describe how Cold War conflict affected the Third World. The new 'old African saying' doing the rounds is: 'And when elephants make love, grass suffers also.'

Sweetening the love-making of East and West is the dream of mutual benefit. The East will provide the West with investment opportunities and cheap labour close to home. The West will provide the East with badly needed cash for economic reconstruction.

No white elephants

Not surprisingly, the Third World loses out. Aid funds are already being redirected to the East from the developing nations of the South. The US has cut its economic support to the Third World from \$545 million to \$350 this year to allow for emergency funds for Eastern Europe.¹ According to USAID official Mark Edelmann, sub-Saharan Africa is likely to suffer further cuts because these countries have no effective lobbying in Washington. 'No one gets more unless someone gets less,' he observed.

Both the British and Australian governments claim that aid for Eastern Europe will not come out of overseas development budgets. But the current climate in the Northern corridors of power does not augur well for the South. US Senator Robert Dole, for example, is calling for major cuts in the \$330 million in aid which goes to the Philippines, Pakistan, Egypt, and Turkey. UK Chancellor of Exchequer John Major has spoken out against funding 'white elephant' development projects in Africa.

The general sense is that 'we have done enough for the Third World'. In fact Western aid to the Third World as a percentage of GNP has been steadily dropping over the past 25 years – only the high profile given to this 'charity' has increased. Indeed, Canada has just approved a 12-per-cent reduction in overseas aid.

The Soviet bloc, meanwhile, is far too preoccupied with its own problems to pay attention to those of its old allies in the South, Angola and Mozambique.

The Third World has another worry: what will be the effect of détente on North-South trade and investment? If the rich countries can invest in Eastern Europe – with its offer of skilled labour at just two dollars an hour – will it bother to invest in the South? If it can trade with the East – will it bother to trade with the South?

The message from the US to Latin America has been clear – either join the free-market party or stay out in the cold. In his 'Americas Initiative' President Bush has outlined his plan to establish a hemisphere-wide free trade zone. The backyard is getting very big indeed.

The Americas Initiative would entail more deregulation, public-spending cuts and an opening up to the world economy. A regional investment fund would be earmarked for countries carrying out privatization programmes. The social and political cost of such an IMF-style programme is well-known. It squeezes the poor hardest.

The shift of attention from South to East is a convenient one for Westerners to make. The problems of the Soviet bloc had nothing to do with colonial exploitation and unfair commodity prices. The West does not feel responsible for – nor guilty about – the mess created there. Rather it can gloat and patronize as it welcomes its prodigal sisters and brothers back to the common, white European fold. Third World countries, meanwhile, face the prospect of having to compete with Eastern Europe – and see it as another big stick the rich world can use against them.

Dirty business

There is one form of North-South trade which is likely to see a sharp increase, however: the dumping of toxic waste on the Third World.

The scale of the former Soviet bloc's pollution and environmental degradation problems have shocked the world. But they have sent a special chill down the spines of Third World ecologists. If Eastern Europe is to be 'cleaned up' to meet Western European standards where will the substitute dumping grounds be? East Germany, for example, earns more than \$620 million a year from taking



Face of a dictator: Ceausescu's televised fall inspired freedom-fighters and terrified tyrants.

Romania 1 Panama 0

Or how the world forgot about an invasion while celebrating a revolution.

It was an eventful Christmas. Two major international stories burst upon our television screens at the same time. Both had an undisputed rogue as main protagonist – one the ruthless and smirking President Nicolae Ceausescu; the other power-crazed, CIA-agent turned would-be dictator General Manuel Noriega.

But it was the revolution in Romania rather than the US invasion of Panama that attracted most attention – especially as the death toll of the protesters at Timisoara rose to a horrifying 6,000.

The invasion of Panama – ostensibly to capture Noriega and make him stand trial in the US for drug trafficking – was a farcical affair by comparison. Panamanians exploiting the chaos to go on shop-looting sprees gave it all an anarchic carnival atmosphere. The deaths of 23 US soldiers were more noticed than the reported deaths of 202 Panamanians. It was the twentieth time the US had invaded Panama. The first time was in 1857 when a US traveller called Jack Olivier refused to pay Jose Manuel Luna the price of a slice of watermelon. *Plus ça change...*

Today the two stories look rather different. The death toll from the Romanian Revolution is still tragic – but has gone down to under 1,000. In Panama, however,



General Noriega: played mouse to the US cat.

the recent discovery of mass graves has pushed the estimated death toll to 3,000 – although it could be higher due to US military orders to incinerate the bodies of victims before they could be identified.¹

Most of the casualties were inhabitants of El Chorillo, a slum area around Noriega's military HQ. The invasion hit this poor neighbourhood like a small Hiroshima. 'The gringos sent about 80 tanks in there that night,' said one resident. Some 200 bodies were pulled out the next day – they were in pieces, dressed mainly in underclothes.

But equally shocking was the international reaction. Cuba produced the only strenuous voice of protest. The USSR merely expressed a perfunctory disapproval of the action in the United Nations. And the issue was quickly forgotten – except by the survivors in El Chorillo.

The eagle stretched its wings and no-one seemed to mind. What is there to stop it from doing the same again?

1 Commission for the Defence of Human Rights of Central America (CODEMUSA) and Mesoamerica, 1990.

Western industrial filth.

Says Indian ecologist Vandana Shiva: 'We in the Third World anticipate that the consolidation of market democracy across the entire North will have very high environmental costs for us... it is the Third World that will bear the ecological costs of the industrialism and consumerism in the North including the costs of 'cleaning up' Eastern Europe.'

Mikhail Gorbachev's recent comment to his people that it is important to maintain relations with the South because the latter is a supplier of cheap materials, has not exactly added to confidence. The tune is that familiar one of neo-colonialism – sung now in East-West unison.

Two fingers to dictatorship

The news is not all grim. Back in December last year Mobutu Sese Seko, the infamous dictator of Zaire, was having dinner when news of the trial and execution of his comrades in corruption, Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu of Romania, was broadcast on television. In some consternation he abandoned his guests.

Mobutu was right to be worried. The revolutionary success of the citizens of Bucharest, Prague and Leipzig was an inspiration to people in many African countries who had almost given up hope of ousting their own corrupt or repressive leaders. Dictatorships of 40 years' standing could be toppled almost overnight. The unimaginable suddenly seemed

possible – or at least worth a try.

And Africans have given it a go. Over the past few months riots, protests and calls for multi-party democracy have rocked capitals across the continent, from Algeria in the north to Zambia in the south. President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia has recently faced a coup attempt and leaders of single-party regimes in Zaire, Tanzania, Benin and Ivory Coast have had to promise to allow opposition parties to stand in the next elections.

'The changes in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and South Africa,' says Zambia's former defence minister Arthur Wina, 'have woken us up from years of indifference and despondency. We are sitting in an atmosphere of real emergency.'

Eastern Europe provided the trigger, but at the root of the discontent was a continent-wide, long-term economic crisis. Africa's huge debt burden to the rich world and the harmful impact of IMF-imposed austerity programmes are largely to blame. And this, ironically enough, is the product of Western capitalism – not of the lack of Western-style democracy.

In this euphoric year of revolutions, multi-party democracy may look like a panacea, but it may prove to be little more than a placebo. National dictatorship as a system of government seems to be disappearing from the face of the globe – in Latin America in the 1980s, then in Eastern Europe and now in Africa.

But a form of international dictatorship

is growing unchecked – that of the market. Its police are the bureaucrats and technocrats of the financial institutions of the rich – GATT, the IMF, the World Bank. Their track record of concern for people in the poorer part of the world is appalling.

Will the new democrats of the East stand up for the Third World in the international community? They may well find that they have more in common when Eastern Europe splits in two. A tiny handful of Eastern European countries (East Germany, Hungary, Poland) will be selected to join the First World, while the majority will find themselves becoming part of a larger Third World – one in which the free market fails to meet even the most basic needs

The great shake-out

The world has been shaken up – and provides the chance to take a fresh look at ways in which global relations might be put on a more equal footing. Events in Eastern Europe have thrown up a plethora of new possibilities:

- A substantial chunk of the huge NATO and Warsaw Pact savings on defence (\$467 billion if 1989 spending were halved) could be allocated for Third World development.² Third World people bore the brunt of the Cold War. They should at least reap some of the benefits of its ending.

- The IMF managed very fast to mobilize large sums from its reserve capital fund for Eastern Europe. Now it could do the same for the Third World by using money from this fund to write off IMF debt arrears. This would help stem the flow of \$110 billion a year from the South to service its debts to the North.³

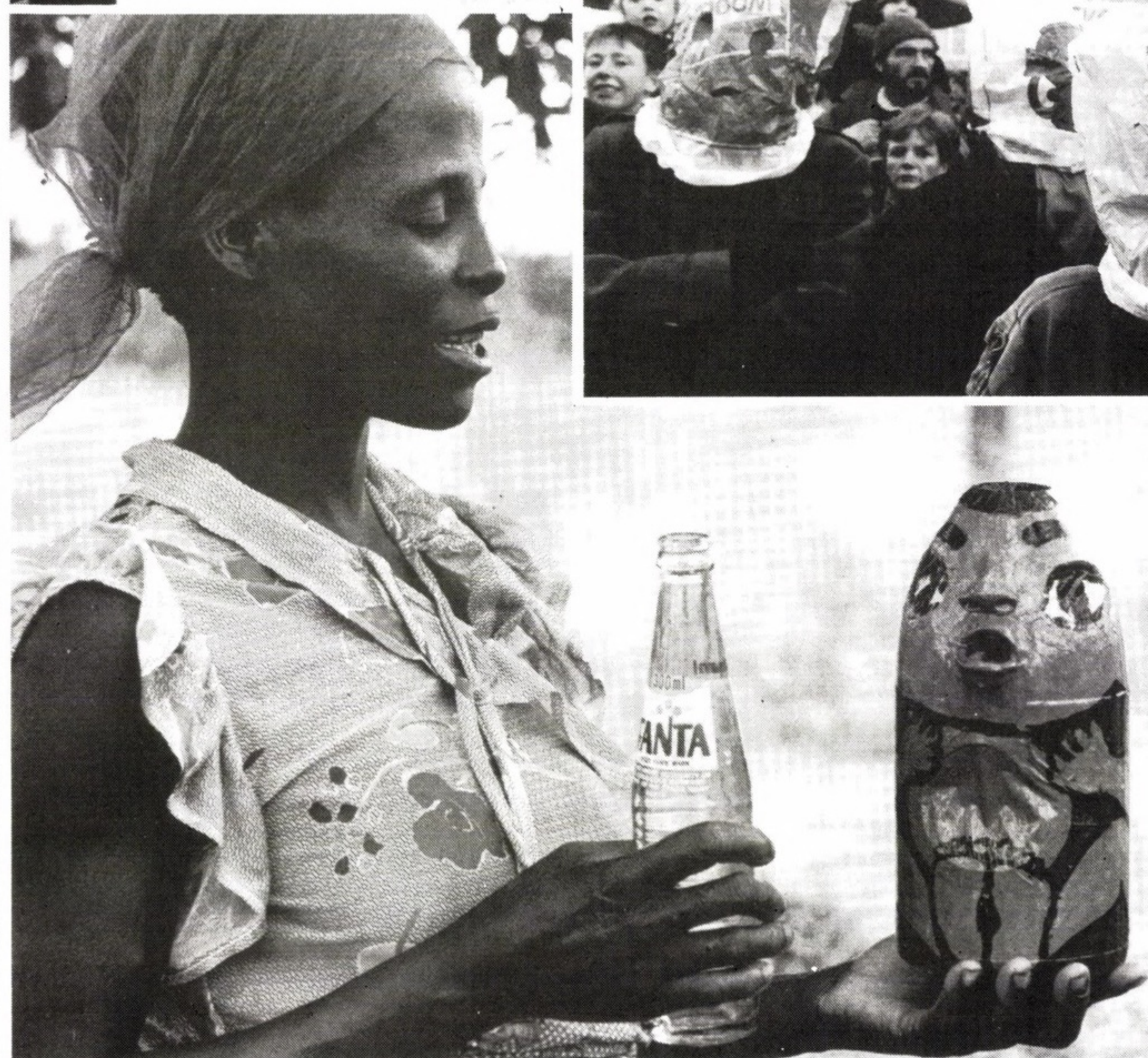
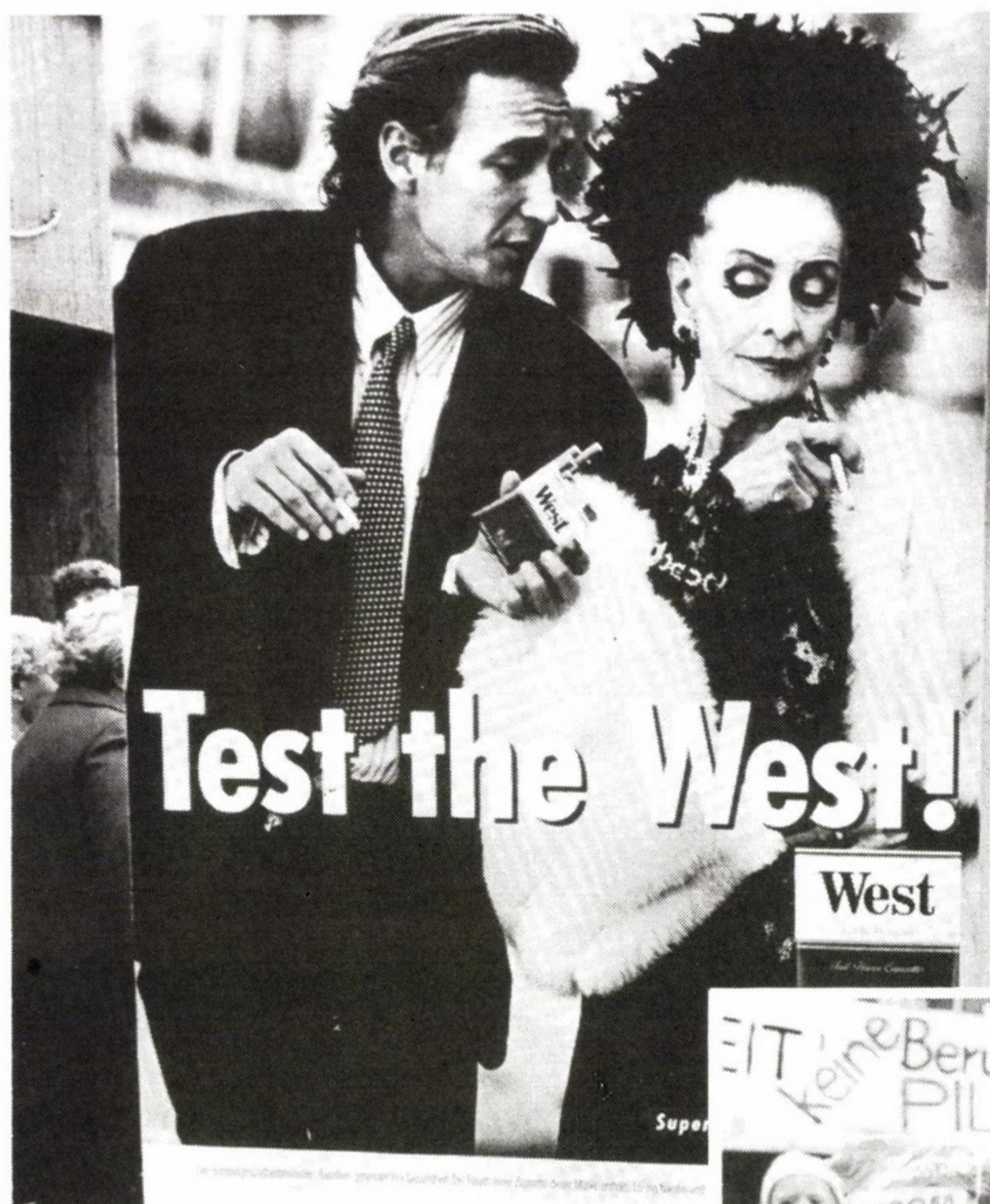
- International agreements on prices for Third World commodities have in the past been hampered by Eastern-bloc reluctance to partake. Now there is no excuse. And commodity-price agreements are far more crucial to Third World economic recovery than aid.

- Last, but not least, the democracies of the North should start work on a form of democracy they prefer to ignore – ecological democracy. That means respecting the life in other regions – and not dumping the toxic rubbish created by excessive consumption habits on less fortunate people in the Third World.

The world we have known for the past four decades has shattered. Between the shards are growing flowers of democracy. But having a choice of parties for which to vote is not enough.

What we all have to do is grasp this chance to promote the idea of One World – before we find that the North-South divide has been cast in the scrap concrete of the Berlin Wall. □

1 Peter Madden in *New Ground*, Summer, 1990. 2 *Real Security*, Geoff Tansey, WDM, 1990. 3 Oxfam Campaigns Unit, 1990.



THE lure of Western-style consumerism is suggested in all sorts of ways to 'innocent' Eastern Europeans. The West (and presumably the cigarette that takes its name) is daring and risqué with a touch of decadence. But some Eastern Europeans are not so easily impressed, placing shopping bags over their heads to protest against the new mania for consumerism. In the Third World Western consumerism has been pushed hard since colonial times. And as with all advertising it promises not just a product but a lifestyle – one imbued with Western values, Western notions of success.



A tale of two cities

Afghanistan's civil war is taking some strange turns, as Behrouz Afagh finds on visiting both sides of the conflict.

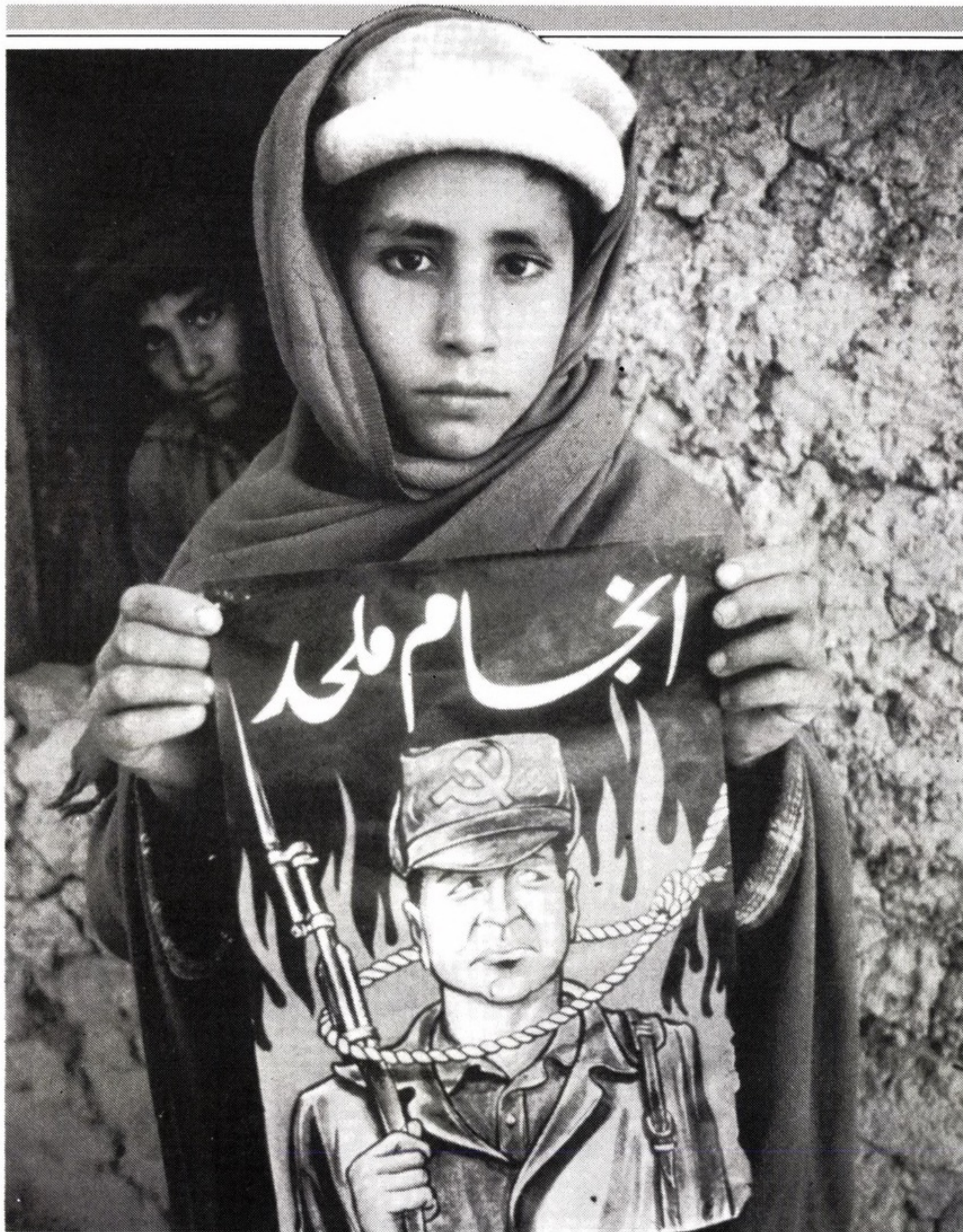


Photo : Steve McCurry/Magnum

Wishful thinking: the Communist Government still rules despite the efforts of mujahedin rebels.

It was over a year since the Soviet troops had withdrawn but all the ingredients of a city at war were there, neatly displayed, on the bright sunny day I arrived in Kabul. At the airport, the burnt-out wreckage of a transport plane shot down while trying to land two weeks earlier was still lying near the runway. The terminal building was a dilapidated empty hall, partitioned with cardboard. The roads were riddled with big pot-holes. Buildings damaged by bombs and rockets were left unrepaired.

Another rocket had fallen on the city in the morning. Another 12 children had been killed. Women were crying and beating their chests while men pulled the

corpses out of the ruin. Two giant Soviet military planes landed and three took off in just half an hour, making the whole city tremble with their sound. The artillery guns were occasionally heard firing from the surrounding mountains. Streets were quiet. People looked poor, sad and tired. For them it was just another ordinary day.

But on the night of 14 May 1990 an important event took place. For the first time in the 12 years that the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan had been in power, a beauty contest was staged in Kabul. In the final round, held amidst loud music, a 20-year-old flight attendant was chosen as Miss Afghanistan 1990. Kabul was going through another

stage of glasnost.

A month before that, again for the first time, the Writers' Union elected a president whose style of writing was not socialist realism. He is not a member of the ruling party but the party chiefs must have been very happy that he, rather than their official candidate, was elected.

Their new policy is to undermine the party – so that it can survive. It sounds complicated, not to say perverse, but the logic is simple. The idea is to prove that they are not the people they were, that they are giving up their communist ideology. The party is changing its name from the People's Democratic Party, so as to be more acceptable to the people. President Najibullah's government is introducing major reforms in the economy and in the education system. It's building new mosques to show that it respects Islam. It's bringing more people from outside the party into the cabinet, and it's promising a democratic multi-party system.

Show, all show

All these changes are meant to persuade the opposition to stop fighting and share power with the Government. But memories of the past 12 years are too bitter.

Asef, a taxi driver, is sceptical. I show him the cuttings I've got from the Kabul press: 'Stalin's unpunished crimes', 'Communism in crisis', 'New Europe', 'Lessons for Afghanistan'. He is not impressed. 'This is just a show to impress people like yourself,' he says. 'The majority of our people don't care about pluralism or press freedom. All they know is that these infidels brought the Russians to our country, and with them, 11 years of war, killing, destruction and hunger.'

Asef was a senior civil servant before the Soviet invasion. He had to retire because he wasn't prepared to co-operate with them. He has spent all these years at home and has only recently been working again. 'Would you have given an interview to a foreign journalist three years ago and been so outspoken against the regime?', I asked him. He knew what I was getting at. He said jokingly 'No, but you are offering me the London rate for this interview: £20 is a lot of money here.'

In fact he didn't expect to be paid, but £20 (\$35) is indeed a lot of money in Kabul. If you change it on the black market, which you can quite openly, it is about three months' salary for a civil servant or an engineer. You can buy meat and fruit with it for a week, which are extremely rare luxuries.

You don't need to be an economist to know that the war has devastated agriculture and that without aid from outside people would simply starve to death. You can see so many farmers in the bazaars of Kabul who have been driven off their land by war, and are now selling fruit that has been imported from Pakistan with money borrowed from the Soviet Union.

Hamid, who taught economics at Kabul

University, could provide all the facts and figures but he didn't need to. His own meagre life was proof enough. He had a second job as a part-time porter and, even with his two incomes, his family hadn't been able to buy any food other than bread, sugar and tea for a whole month.

The soldiers who guard the Afghan Foreign Ministry building in the centre of Kabul know how to ask you in English if you can spare a cigarette. This is all they can say to foreign journalists who visit the press centre for briefings every day in the afternoon. But if you understand their language, they will not let you go without giving you a long passionate speech. 'Why has the world forgotten us? Why has the war got to go on? Haven't we suffered enough? You must tell our mujahed brothers that the Russians have gone. You must ask our people to come back home. You must tell the world we need their help.'

No sign of God's help

'God's help is only a prayer away,' says a big blue sign on the main road about five miles from Peshawar, just over the border in Pakistan where refugees and mujahedin guerillas are to be found. A few yards further on, a narrow mud alley on the right is the entrance to Kachegary, one of the many camps set up in Pakistan to house three million Afghan refugees. It was late afternoon when I arrived there. Men wrapped in dun-coloured blankets were sitting outside the camp mosque. They had finished their afternoon prayers. There was no sign of God's help, only of extreme poverty.

They live in mud huts and ragged tents, a large family of 10 or 12 in a single room. Dark, empty and full of disease. Munir's nine-year-old son had died a week ago. He had drunk contaminated water. Munir had already lost two sons in the war.

'Do you have any other children?'

'Yes, two little girls, and maybe another son next winter.' I thought he was too old to father children. He looked 80. He was 41. He had no teeth in his mouth.

There were no women in sight. They are confined to their homes all day, not to be seen by strange men. Many suffer from depression. Most of them cannot read or write. They are not allowed to learn. They are not allowed to work. Their pride is in the men they have lost in the war.

In Kachegary, most refugees have been around for some years and have learned how to survive. But for the newcomers life is more difficult. They cannot find work and Western aid organizations are running out of money to feed them. Cash and food from the West, say the aid experts, are being switched to Eastern Europe, and the Afghan refugees are losing out. They are becoming victims of glasnost.

When the Soviet troops completed their withdrawal from Afghanistan, refugees hoped they would soon be able

cont'd on page 10

VIEWPOINT : CONFLICTS



Backyard bullies

THE superpowers have often been blamed for meddling in Third World trouble spots and prolonging wars there to serve their own interests. Will there now be more chance of peace?

Maybe. But there has been a tendency to over-estimate the role played by super-power rivalry in Third World conflicts. Of the 23 major conflicts in progress in 1989 only five or six of them had any superpower involvement.

The fact is that people have their own reasons for fighting. Perhaps the world will now pay more attention to these real local causes. In some cases this clearer vision might make it easier to resolve conflicts.

But there is also a real danger of conflicts becoming bloodier and more numerous. By and large the superpowers worked to restrain their Third World allies. A contained war on the other side of the globe suited the US or the USSR. A war that was allowed to career out of control threatened global security – and consequently the security of the superpowers themselves. Without this constraining influence there might be more of the 'no holds barred' approach to warfare. With arsenals of chemical and nuclear weapons proliferating around the world this is, to say the least, very worrying.

As conflicts become more local or regional the external players are more likely to be neighbours, with a vested interest in the outcome of the war. Israel, for example, may get more involved in the Middle East in order to secure its position in the region. It is already doing so in Ethiopia. India may meddle more in the affairs of its sub-continental neighbours. It may prove difficult to control the imperialist, expansionist ambitions of such regional powers. The obvious bullies will be the people who live next door – not those who have come from the other side of the world.

But in some cases, of course, the superpowers themselves are the bullying neighbours – and their interest in their own 'backyard' is unlikely to diminish. Nicaragua, for instance, was to the US what Afghanistan was to the USSR. But while the Soviets eventually had to admit defeat and withdraw, the Americans won their covert war against Nicaragua.

War weary and impoverished, when

Nicaraguans went to the polls earlier this year they voted for the coalition supported by the US, knowing that only they could guarantee an end to US hostility and reopen the channels of aid and trade.

Today the peace is uncertain and the aid decidedly dodgy. The Contras are handing over arms – but only their outdated ones. In the meantime they are operating death squads in that part of the country where they have managed to retain control.

On the aid front, the US has promised \$300 million – \$45 million of which is earmarked for the Contras. So far \$60 million has emerged – only one-hundredth of the \$6,000 million bandied around during the election campaign, and a fraction of the \$17,000-million worth of damage caused by US-backed forces over the past decade.

Some of the aid, moreover, is distinctly unhelpful. The Christian Broadcasting Network sent 20,000 boxes of Anyways Critics Choice Popcorn, as part of 'Operation Blessing'. The popcorn came in several flavours – cheddar cheese, cinnamon, sour cream – all of

which had to be destroyed when found to be rancid. Then arrived the thousands of Nutrilite Food bars (expiry dates 1987 and 1988). Mr Bonilla Vargas, the receiver of this largesse, was finally prompted to comment: 'The Christian Broadcasting Network is engaging in a great business where the poor of the world are just another factor on the spreadsheet, somewhere to dump old food or defective toothbrushes'.

Nicaragua badly needs medicines. So, amid much media hype, a plane-load was shepherded through by the US President's son, Marvin Bush. It was unfortunate that 60 per cent of the medicines had exceeded their expiry date and had to be destroyed on arrival.

More serious is the offer being made by the Florida-based Lyons Investment Inc. The company will provide Nicaragua with 230,000 tons of incinerated ash, which could be used as landfill for swampy areas on the Atlantic coast. When local biologists examined a sample, however, they found that the ash contained arsenic, aluminium, lead and copper, likely to cause lung cancers, delirium, comas or death. It was toxic enough to pollute the Atlantic coast for the next 150 years. The Government is still pondering whether to sign on the dotted line and let the US's backyard become its junkyard.

When there is fighting it is the backyard that gets wrecked. When a superpower pulls out of the fray the backyard may be forgotten. Or worse still it may be remembered ...



Cartoon : Jim Needle

to return to their own country. Now their future looks bleak. Meanwhile their leaders, who have made fortunes out of the war, are squabbling with each other in their luxury mansions.

Mujahedin top brass

In a pleasant tree-lined avenue in University Town, the residential suburb of Peshawar, a huge, lavish building forms the headquarters of the Afghan Interim Government, probably the world's most disorganized government-in-exile. A fleet of expensive Japanese land-cruisers are parked in the courtyard and a dozen bearded young men with Kalashnikovs are standing guard at the gate.

Inside, the President-in-exile is telling me that he agrees with the latest UN plan to help refugees return to safe areas inside Afghanistan. He is also giving me the news that a fellow guerilla leader has been appointed as his new foreign minister. The President is probably not aware that one of his ministers has rejected the UN plan just a few hours ago and that the new foreign minister is to reject the appointment a few hours later. When I get up to leave, an official spokesperson tells me that he has no faith in this government. He doesn't even ask to remain anonymous.

In the same neighbourhood are more buildings under construction for the expanding ministries. The men who will occupy them were boasting last year that they would be saying their prayers in Kabul's main mosque by New Year's Eve.

They thought they had defeated the Soviet army and that it would take only a few months to bring down the regime left behind in Kabul. Within weeks thousands of people were lying dead in the battlefield around Jalalabad. The guerillas' offensive to capture this strategic border town had turned into their bloodiest defeat of the entire war.

Like their patrons in the West, the guerilla leaders had believed their own propaganda. Soon their men were fighting each other while the US began to lose faith in them. Now, after a year of wavering, Washington seems to have finally decided that the mujahedin cannot win the war and has agreed with Moscow that the future should be decided by elections. But it still continues supplying arms to them. The US policy-makers probably believe they don't have much to win or lose in Afghanistan and do not appear to have any sense of urgency in resolving this conflict, which has driven one-third of Afghanistan's population into exile.

Meanwhile, as the world's image of the Soviet Union has changed, so the mujahedin's image has been changing too. The men who were once brave freedom fighters struggling against the evil communist empire are seen today as narrow-minded fundamentalists who are killing each other for guns and drugs.

I wanted to interview a leading Afghan writer living in exile in Peshawar.

He would not see me. He was afraid that he might get killed by extremist mujahedin. It's dangerous to be a moderate Afghan intellectual in Peshawar these days if you go around telling journalists what you think. So the following is not what he said. It's what I imagine he would have said:

'The mujahedin leaders never believed that the Soviet decision to leave Afghanistan had anything to do with reforms in the Soviet Union itself. Godless communist regimes, they thought, could never change. A year on, regimes across Eastern Europe have fallen and the entire communist world has changed, but the mujahedin haven't changed their mind. Some of them seriously believe that the people of Eastern Europe took their lead from the mujahedin, who are still debating whether they should allow women to vote when Afghanistan is freed and after they have killed and buried all the communists.'

His fellow writers actually said this:

'Communism has failed. Gorbachev is only responding to history. He had to liberalize the Soviet system. He had to support the reforms in Eastern Europe. He had to pull his army out of Afghanistan. Yes, he has to be given some credit, but only for doing what had to be done. The Afghans are not impressed by him. Look how he crushed our Muslim brothers in Central Asia. He helped East Germans to get rid of their communist regime but he is still supporting the communist government in Afghanistan.'

They said they would never go back as long as the present regime is in power. Neither would any of the other refugees I met. But then I never got the chance to hear what their wives thought, stuck in their little huts, spending another long summer in the unbearable heat of Peshawar.

Back in Kabul

You go to the briefing, you come back to the hotel, you report another mopping-up operation in the north or a new offensive in the south. You finish your story, you sit down to have tea with the telex operator. He tells you his story. It is the story of Afghanistan.

His name is Mazlum. He had a brother fighting for the mujahedin in a place called Panjshir who is still alive. But his elder brother died seven years ago. He was a pilot in the Afghan air force. His plane was shot down in a combat mission. It was a bombing raid on Panjshir. The two brothers were fighting on opposite sides in the same battle. Mazlum had to look after his old parents, otherwise he too would have gone to fight. You don't ask him on which side. He has already told you that all he wants now is peace. □

Behrouz Afagh is an Iranian journalist working on the BBC World Service.

ACTION REPLAY

The NI plays back the past 12 months, highlighting the events that have changed the political shape of the world.

1989
AUGUST

Protests and violence are escalating in the outlying Soviet republics of **Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia**, challenging the authority of Moscow.

Meanwhile Hungary, having demolished its own Iron Curtain with Austria, is now for the first time beginning to let East Germans cross that border to get to the West.

SEPTEMBER



This is Europe's biggest migration since the end of World War Two, with about 60,000 East Germans 'on holiday' in Hungary, poised to flee to West Germany. The West German embassy in **Prague** is packed with East Germans voting with their feet.

Meanwhile, in **Poland**, non-Communists gain power for the first time in 40 years. A cabinet is formed consisting of Solidarity, Communists, democrats and members of the peasant party.

On the other side of the world the last **Vietnamese** troops are pulling out of **Cambodia** - leaving citizens fearful that the Khmer Rouge might regain power.

OCTOBER

The Communist Party in **Hungary** votes for its own death sentence, turning back 40 years of Marxism-Leninism. They now call themselves the Social Democrats and are paving the way for multi-party elections next year. They proclaim a new republic and Eastern Europe's first post-Stalinist constitution.

In **East Germany** protests are rocking cities all over the country. There are violent clashes in Leipzig and Potsdam.

In **Czechoslovakia** riot police break up a crowd of 10,000 people gathered in Prague's Wenceslas Square demanding reform.

While in the **USSR** the Russian Parliament approves a law that gives workers the right to strike but bans stoppages in key areas.

NOVEMBER

One million people march for reform in **East Berlin**. The East German government resigns, the Politburo is replaced and Hans Modrow becomes Premier. All the border points are suddenly opened



on 9 November and the next day the Berlin Wall itself is opened. Parties, celebrations and joyful reunions occur for several days as people knock holes in the Wall. Two million visitors from East Germany flood West Berlin. The European Community agrees aid for **Poland** and **Hungary**.

In **Bulgaria** the longest-serving communist boss in Eastern Europe, Todor Zhivkov, resigns and 100,000 people in Sofia take part in the largest political demonstration the country has seen since World War Two.

In **Czechoslovakia**, the entire politburo resigns five days after a 50,000-strong demonstration demanding free elections and the dismissal of the Communist Party leader Milos Jakes. Alexander **Dubcek**, the premier deposed by the Russians when they invaded in 1968, returns to a hero's welcome in Prague.

And in the **USSR** over 150,000 Christians march demanding the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

DECEMBER



The end of the Cold War is declared at 12.45pm, 3 December 1989, after the Malta summit where **USSR** President Mikhail Gorbachev and **US** President George Bush agree to sign arms controls pacts in June.

East German head of state Egon Krenz is ousted – just six weeks after replacing Erich Honeker.

In **Czechoslovakia** a new government, the first with a non-Communist majority, is sworn in. Alexander Dubcek is elected Chair of the Parliament. Vaclav Havel is elected President.

Meanwhile in **Romania** up to 2,000 anti-government protesters are reported massacred in the city of Timisoara. Bloody street fighting rages in Bucharest after a Ceausescu rally erupts into a protest demonstration. Ceausescu flees. He and his wife Elena are captured, tried by revolutionary court and executed by firing squad.

While all this is going on, President Bush has ordered US troops to invade **Panama**, ousting President Manuel Noriega.

1990

JANUARY

East German demonstrators storm the Stasi secret police headquarters in East Berlin, smashing windows, rifling through files and daubing walls with graffiti.

In **Romania** there are clashes between supporters and opponents of the National Salvation Front which has taken over the running of the country since Ceausescu's death. Demonstrators protest about the Front's decision to participate in the May elections.

FEBRUARY

At the **USSR** Communist Party's Central Committee plenum in Moscow, President Gorbachev points the way to a multi-party system and the end of the Communist Party's monopoly of power. The plenum also approves the creation of a new-style presidency, the replacement of the Politburo with a 30-member Presidium and the appointment of a Party Chairperson.

In **Nicaragua**, national elections unexpectedly result in the defeat of the Sandinistas and victory for the US-backed coalition party, UNO, led by Violeta Chamorro.



In **Ethiopia** the Eritrean People's Liberation Front captures the strategic city and deepwater port of Massawa from the Soviet-backed government in the largest battle to have taken place in Africa since World War Two.

MARCH

The first free election ever held in **East Germany** brings to power the conservative Alliance for Germany, backed by West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Lothar de Maiziere is appointed Prime Minister.



Hungary goes to the polls for the first free elections since November 1945. After a second round of voting the centre-right Hungarian Democratic Forum, led by Jozsef Antall, emerges as the clear winner.

An attempted coup by army officers against **Afghanistan's** President Najibullah fails.

US starts beaming anti-Castro Television Marti at **Cuba**.

APRIL

Four years after the Chernobyl nuclear accident in the **USSR** experts reassess the radiation levels and decide that as many as 100,000 more Byelorussians must be relocated. Nearly half a million more will receive income supplements to buy decontaminated food.

MAY

In **Romania** the National Salvation Front wins a landslide victory in the country's elections, under the leadership of Ion Iliescu.

There is an attempted coup from within the armed forces against **Ethiopia's** Soviet-backed leader, Mengistu Haile Mariam. It fails and 30 officers are executed.

JUNE



The **US** and **USSR** each agree to cut their nuclear arsenals by 30 per cent and to cut chemical weapons by 5,000 tons on each side.

Pro-democracy Chinese exiles protest on the 4 June anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre where 2,600 died and 10,000 were injured. The commemoration is suppressed in **China** itself.

In **Czechoslovakia**, a combined force of Civic Forum – the movement founded by writer Vaclav Havel and friends – and Slovak allies Public Against Violence gain a large election majority.

Bulgaria, however, departs from the continental trend by voting the Communist Party back to power. Opposition groups stage protests, claiming election irregularities but this is not supported by independent foreign observers.

Anti-Government riots in **Romania** are suppressed by the army and 11 people are killed. President Iliescu calls upon miners to put down protests. They come in from the countryside and roam the streets beating protesters with clubs. Iliescu retains power.

JULY

It's a month of surprises. First, Soviet radical reformer Boris Yeltsin suddenly announces at the 28th **USSR** Communist Party Congress that he is leaving the Party and taking fellow radicals with him. This could create a separate power centre in Soviet politics.

But Gorbachev has an even bigger surprise up his sleeve when he announces a sudden U-turn in the Soviet policy towards a **united Germany**. Yes, he says, the united Germany could be within NATO – with certain safeguards. It must not possess atomic, biological and chemical weapons.

Meanwhile, in **Zambia**, an attempted coup against the single-party rule of President Kenneth Kaunda fails. And **Kenyan** leader Daniel arap Moi responds to protests in his country by imprisoning opponents.

The US suddenly announces that it is withdrawing support from the **Kampuchean** coalition (which includes the Khmer Rouge) and will instead open a dialogue with its old enemy, **Vietnam**.

Meanwhile, **South** and **North Korea** start talking about opening their equivalent of the Iron Curtain.



Black in the USSR

Racism is on the rise in the former Eastern bloc. Tajudeen Abdul Raheem looks at the forces driving it – and at the implications for Third World people.

AN African psychology student recently conducted an experiment. He donned a pair of Levis, cowboy boots and hat and hit the streets of Moscow. People came up to him and asked him questions, to which he replied in an American accent. This met with a warm, interested response. He was quizzed about Michael Jackson, Lionel Richie and other Black American stars. No-one called the student *abisyan* (monkey) – the name he was used to on buses and trains, in taxis and bars.

As a Black American he was seen first as a superpower citizen, a master of consumerism and creator of popcorn, Big Mac and blue jeans. Cold War propaganda, in which the US was the principal enemy, had encouraged awe and an envious interest in Americans in general. Colour of skin was clearly secondary.

Had he been Latin American he might have been seen primarily as a revolutionary veteran. As an Arab he might have been seen as a source of hard currency. As an Asian he might have been seen as a Soviet from the far east of the Union. But as an African studying in the Soviet Union, his experience was of naked racism. Why?

A quick look at the history of Soviet-African relations provides some of the answers. A Soviet journalist called B Asoyan recently tackled the issue in *Komsomol Pravda*, the youth edition of the Soviet daily. His article bears the ambiguous title: 'About the Black Colour – a colour you can never miss'.

It tells us that the first time most Soviet people came into contact with Black people was the 1957 Festival of Youth to which newly independent Ghana sent representatives.

By the mid-1960s many more African countries had won independence and could send athletes to the Soviet International Sports Festival held in the Ukraine. This created uproar among the local population, who had picked up the image – left over from slavery times in the US – of Black men as insatiable sexual athletes. The US slavers had responded to this myth by hanging hundreds of Black men. The authorities in 1960s USSR responded by decreeing that Black visitors should not go out after 8pm – for their own safety.

Like the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe had virtually no contact with Africa until the 1950s and 1960s, when the communist-bloc countries supported Third World liberation movements against colonial domination. During the Cold War, Western colonial powers saw all Third World liberation movements as communist inspired. The communist bloc, for its part, saw an opportunity to spread its ideology. The prevailing idea that 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' benefited the Third World – initially at any rate.

But in the long term it promoted the image of Third World people as helpless, in need of salvation from the marauding power of Western capitalist nations. They could only be saved through Soviet-style top-down socialism. It was case of 'copy us or copy them'.

In fact, the images of Africa that were fed to Soviet and Eastern European people were not essentially different from those fed to Western citizens. Westerners justified their exploitation of Africa and Africans by seeing it as the 'white man's burden' to 'liberate' these people from their African ways. The Eastern bloc, though not exploiting Africans directly, also sought to convince their own working classes that it was their international duty to 'liberate' these people from the Western capitalist oppressors.

Pro-Soviet trade unionists, students and other Third World people were brought to the communist countries for training in the universities and technical schools as evidence of this 'internationalism'. It gave rise to a popular feeling amongst Eastern Europeans that their problems of inadequate resources and technology were due to their internationalist obligations.

It is not therefore surprising that in the present era of perestroika and glasnost foreigners – and especially Third World people – became the first target of nationalist, isolationist East Europeans. Since the advent of glasnost a can of worms of racism has burst shamelessly across Eastern Europe.

So far attention has been focussed on *Pamyat* (Heritage) and other neo-fascist groups in the Soviet Union and their activities against the Jews. But every anti-Jewish organisation is also anti-Black – whether it be the National Front in France



and Britain or the Nazis in Germany.

The problem is not just extremist groups of racists. A disturbing coalition in Eastern Europe between right-wing forces and *perestroika* enthusiasts is emerging that is detrimental to the wishes of Black and Third World people.

One force stresses a return to some glorious past before 'socialism' and the other is based upon the dawn of a new era in a 'common European home' (Gorbachev's own words). Although they start off from different ideological positions they will both have the effect of reviving European chauvinism, isolationism and xenophobia.

Discrimination against Africans and other Third World people in Eastern Europe is nothing new. But the existence of official communist ideology and its adherence to internationalism did help to check people's prejudices. With the pro-democracy rejection of the past, however, has come a rejection of internationalism and of support for Third World liberation movements.

Many people now see previous solidarity with the Third World as a stumbling block on their way to being European. Being properly European means being unsympathetic towards other



people. The motto used to be 'We can't be racists because we are socialists'. Now it seems to be 'We used to be communists now we are just Europeans'. In their quest to return to Europe there is the danger that they will throw away all values of universalism and internationalism, promoting national chauvinism instead.

No event demonstrates this attitude better than the demand by the miners of the Ukraine during their highly publicized strike last year that all aid to the Third World be stopped.

The bottom line is that Africans are viewed as 'people we do things for – and now that we want to do things for ourselves, sorry comrades, you'll just have to go elsewhere.'

And they do. There were 22,000 Africans studying in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe up to 1988. At the beginning of this year there were only 7,200. The main reason for this has been the rise in racist and fascist groups in the East. Students now try to go to India or Cuba instead.

Eastern Europeans are going elsewhere too. Another worrying trend in African-European relations is the opening up of the East to South Africa. It seems that they are judging the degree of their

democracy by their ability to condone undemocratic repressive and inhuman regimes. Thus Pik Botha, South Africa's foreign minister, was one of the first visitors to post-revolutionary Czechoslovakia and Hungary. There are even reports of Hungarians emigrating to South Africa. There are glimmers of hope on this horizon.

The closed nature of society has been a source of many of the problems in Eastern Europe. Now that it is more open people can express themselves. This may take the form of racist expression – but by the same token it will make it possible to campaign against racism, which has never been properly addressed as an issue. In this area, anyway, lessons are being drawn from the West. The Immigrants Political Forum, a race-relations campaign group that has become increasingly active in East Germany, has its origins in West Berlin.

The opening up of Cold War frontiers also removes some of the causes of resentment against foreigners living in the Soviet Union. Foreign students often enjoyed privileges their Soviet

counterparts could not. For example, foreigners were allowed to travel abroad twice a year. This meant they could go to the West during vacations, earn some money, buy Western consumer items, take them back and sell them to their less fortunate Soviet fellow students.

It is hard to tell what will happen. But the greater pluralism which is currently throwing up so many bad things, could throw up some good ones too. Soviet people may now, for example, have the opportunity to meet Black people who are not students – perhaps entrepreneurs or people who have come to settle.

One thing is clear, though. Throughout Eastern Europe the State, which up to now has been the only protector against racism, is in disarray. Anything can – and does – happen. Which means the Blacks and non-racists of Eastern Europe are going to have to organize themselves – and fast.

Tajudeen Abdul Raheem works with the Africa Research and Information Bureau in London.

VIEWPOINT: RACE



Fortress Europe

EVEN before the raising of the Iron Curtain people from Third World countries were wondering what would happen to them when Western Europe became a single market in 1992. Now immigrant workers in Europe – and the families they support back home – know the news is bad.

Already braving a rising tide of racism, they now face the prospect of job losses and deportation. Official estimates show that up to two million East Germans will become unemployed as a result of the reconstruction of the nation's economy. Where will they go? West, of course. Whose jobs will they take? Those of the Turks, the Moroccans and the Algerians, most likely.

In Eastern Europe itself there has already been a sharp reduction in the number of Third World immigrant workers. In 1988 there were 5,600 Mozambicans working in East Germany. Now there are just 1,700.

For Third World workers who stay in their own country the prospects are not too hot either. International investment is tipped to go East rather than South. The

attractions are manifold. At two dollars an hour or less, wage levels in Eastern Europe are lower than in South Korea or Taiwan; the labour force is highly educated; and foreign-investment laws are exceptionally liberal, permitting, in the case of Poland, 100-per-cent ownership. Not least – for a Europe where racism is on the upsurge – Eastern Europeans are white, and in the case of the Germanies, share a language and a history.

The shattering of the Soviet bloc raises different problems for Third World liberation movements. The African National Congress (ANC) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), for example, suddenly find they have lost a pillar of support.

They have reacted to this in two ways. On the one hand, liberation movements have found themselves having to soften their demands and modify their position. This has been particularly true of the ANC over the last few months.

On the other hand they now feel that they are in a position to view the Soviet Union more critically – and have been more outspoken in their comments. This cannot but be healthy and it may lead Third World socialists to draw upon their own resources and experiences instead of mimicking Soviet models.

But for refugees – both political and economic – the doors to both Eastern and Western Europe are more tightly closed than ever.



Cartoon: Jim Needle



Disobedient domino

Fidel Castro is cast as the lone reactionary, saying to hell with glasnost and perestroika. Can he – and Cuban socialism – survive? Mandy Macdonald thinks the pundits may have got it wrong.



Photo: Julio Etchart

Uncertain times. Young Communists are being prepared for leadership – but Castro remains.

A WARM wind blows off the sea: washed clean by the afternoon's brief downpour, the sky deepens fast to a velvety ultramarine. On front porches across the city, small groups of men are gathering, settling themselves on stools and in rocking chairs. Above the relentless background of cricket-song, you can hear the musical, dry clicking of wooden tiles being laid out on the table. It's a Friday night in Havana, and the game is dominoes.

In Washington and Miami, too, dominoes is something of a national sport, only the pieces are small developing countries. The political centre of gravity in the US 'backyard' has moved sharply to the right this year, with right-wing electoral successes in Honduras, Costa Rica, and most notably Nicaragua. According to Vice-President Dan Quayle, Cuba is 'the last real problem in our hemisphere'.

With the break-up of the Soviet 'empire', the US Administration and the powerful Cuban exile lobby in Miami are now betting on Cuba as the last, teetering Latin American domino. They're even making preparations for life after Castro: a new constitution has been drafted and corporate investments lined up. It is rumoured that US aid will be restored in

the event of Castro's fall.

There's a large helping of wishful thinking in this scenario, however. For, although it gets little press in the West, Cuba is going through some far-reaching political and economic transformations, at the same time as it is fervently reaffirming national independence and the values that have shaped Cuban socialism.

This annoys the US which, buoyed by the Stalinist disappearing act in Eastern Europe and its own recent victories in Nicaragua and Panama, is hoping to wear down Cuba by forcing it to waste time and money on constant military mobilization. Three military manoeuvres coincided off Cuba's coasts in April, prompting Cuba to hold its own defensive exercises, called 'Cuban Shield'.

Then there was the Television Marti project – an absurdly expensive, questionably legal, attempt to beam US anti-Castro propaganda into Cuba. Generally discredited even in official US circles, its only success is that it is costing Cuba a lot to jam it – though not nearly as much as the estimated seven million dollars of US public money it cost to mount it.

The US also appears to be seeking to discredit Fidel Castro and his colleagues by tainting them with drug trafficking.

Panamanian strongman Noriega may be offered a soft sentence in return for implicating Castro as a mediator in his negotiations with Colombian drug interests. The Cuban-chartered freighter *Hermann* was fired upon near Mexican waters recently by a US coastguard cutter. Yet no drugs or other illegal cargo were found on board.

Meanwhile the disintegration of communism in Eastern Europe has highlighted Cuba's perilous dependency on a hitherto privileged trading relationship. As the Eastern European countries struggle to restructure their own economies the immediate losers are their friends in the South. Trade with East Germany, Cuba's main trading partner after the Soviet Union, may disappear altogether after German unification. Several other Comecon countries did not renew their trading agreements with Cuba this year.

Bread out of oranges

The effects of this shift were felt in January, when ships from East Germany, Poland and the USSR failed to arrive to collect their consignments of Cuban oranges, leaving the fruit to rot in warehouses or be dumped on the domestic market. At the same time, Soviet shippers defaulted on wheat deliveries to Cuba, demanding hard currency for the job. Cuba was forced to buy flour from Canada: the price of bread rose for the first time in 30 years and was even rationed in some places. 'Pity you can't make bread out of oranges', one Havana woman wryly remarked.

Politically, too, Cuba and its former friends are estranged. Cuba was alarmed, then indignant, when Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland and Czechoslovakia voted in favour of a US-sponsored motion at the UN Commission on Human Rights to monitor alleged human-rights violations in Cuba – the first time such a motion had been passed. Around the same time, Czechoslovakia announced that it no longer wished to host the Cuban Interests Section, Cuba's diplomatic representation in Washington. In the Soviet Union, however, there are greater qualms about simply dumping Cuba.

How has this web of pressures affected Cuba? Ideologically, Cuba's response has been to turn isolation into independence, and to dissociate itself publicly not only from the new systems in Eastern Europe (except the Soviet Union) and Nicaragua but also from the ones they replaced.

According to Castro the Sandinistas failed because they tried to walk a tightrope between socialism and capitalism. He deplores Eastern Europe's rush to capitalism but pre-empts predictions that Cuba might go the same way by declaring that Cuba is not and never has been Stalinist. More than ever, the indigenous nature of Cuban socialism is being stressed. 'No-one gave us a revolution,' Fidel told an international press conference in April. 'It wasn't imported from

anywhere. We made it ourselves.'

Out in the hard world of economic reality, rather different criteria apply. Cuba, like Eastern Europe, is having to become a hard-currency based economy. If trade with Comecon dries up Cuba will have little choice but to export products on the open market.

There are already signs of Cuba bracing itself for serious belt-tightening after 1990. The legendary grocery queues are getting longer. Shop shelves are bare, at least in Havana. An emergency austerity regime has been established which can be set in motion when needed. Called 'a special period in peacetime', it would halt social programmes, shorten the working day, and ration energy. But hard-currency-generating activities would continue, including tourism.

The picture is not so bleak yet. Neither the Soviet Union nor most of the other Eastern European countries can do without Cuban imports yet. Cuba currently supplies the USSR with 80 per cent of its sugar, 40 per cent of its citrus fruits and 70 per cent of its nickel.

Soviet subsidies to the Cuban economy may have come under fire within the USSR – particularly the purchase of Cuban sugar at prices well above the world level – but the 1990 Cuban-Soviet trade and co-operation agreement actually increases the previous trade volume of \$14.4 billion. For the present the worst that could happen would be for the USSR to reduce or cut its oil shipments.

Meanwhile Cuba is trying to develop new export lines such as sugar by-products, pharmaceuticals and hi-tech medical equipment. It is seeking new trading and joint-venture partners, both in the North and the South, and is expanding tourism.

Changing of the guard

Cuba is by no means as isolated as it might seem. This year has seen a massive diplomatic and public-relations effort, much of it designed to consolidate Cuba's position as a Third World leader. Friendly relations are being cultivated with governments and business communities in countries from Britain to Iraq. Cuba has acquired a seat on the UN Security Council for two years and in April it became the chair of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. Meanwhile the increasing religious freedom in the country should result in a papal visit around the end of the year – an astute as well as praiseworthy shift in policy.

None of these changes are cosmetic. Cuba faces the most serious economic challenge of its 30-year revolution. If it is to survive, creative and radical solutions will be required. Fidel Castro, while still keeping a close and very personal grasp on government, is not getting any younger, and the future direction of the Party and Government must be planned. This may be one of the reasons why the Communist Party has announced its

Fourth Congress for early 1991.

A whole generation born and raised in socialist Cuba now wants something different. It takes for granted that all Cubans will have enough to eat, a roof over their heads, decent education and health care. The Government badly needs to ensure young people's support and provide a counter-attraction to the consumer temptations just across the Florida straits – or in the Havana dollar shops.

Blessed are the stubborn

No doubt this has played some part in the most recent political changes. Electoral procedures have been reformed to make them more democratic, secret ballots introduced and greater power given to the elected National Assembly. Earlier this year a major reshuffle removed several members of the revolutionary 'old guard' and replaced them with young people. Young Communists such as Roberto Robaina are being groomed for leadership and placed in responsible positions in important hard-currency sectors.

But the domino-players in Washington and Miami don't want to see this kind of change in Cuba. Nothing but the fall of Fidel, elections on the US or European model and the imposition of a free-market economy will satisfy them. That is what they are waiting for and trying to hasten by economic blockade and tireless efforts

to discredit Castro and his government.

They are unlikely to get their wish very soon. Cuba has no intention of holding 'free' elections. Nor will the people rise up in revolt: dissidents inside the country, while vocal (especially to foreigners) and often expressing real concerns about freedom of information and political association, number less than a thousand and could not by any stretch of the imagination be called organized. Besides, they have no serious alternative political programme. For well over a century, the traditional Cuban way of expressing protest has been to leave the country. Even Cuban exiles are mysteriously silent about any joyous mass return to their native island if Fidel falls – except to build holiday homes.

Cuba may be facing an uncertain future, but this year's May Day celebrations brought more Cubans onto the streets than ever before. Even Western media called it the most spectacular demonstration in the Western hemisphere and one of the largest in the world. 'Blessed are the stubborn!' Castro had cried to the press conference a month earlier. And his country is certainly one domino that stubbornly refuses to topple. □

Mandy Macdonald is a British journalist who has lived in Cuba and been a Cuba-watcher for many years.

VIEWPOINT : ENEMIES



Desperately seeking Satan

THE US Right is in a fix. There is nothing like an easily identifiable enemy for concentrating the forces of reaction. But the Evil Empire has crumbled. Where can Satan be found next?

Apart from an unfortunate historic connection with the CIA, the former Panamanian leader General Manuel Noriega was a good choice. He was Latin American and his policies threatened US security interests (including the Canal).

But most important of all he was linked with cocaine trafficking. Drugs is Social Evil Number One, and a difficult problem to tackle at its root in the US way of life that creates the demand for the drug. What could be more convenient than to shift the drugs spotlight onto a foreign ruler hostile to US interests in the region. Thus two birds could be killed with one stone – and

hundreds of innocent civilians were killed in the US invasion of Panama.

Japan is an increasingly promising enemy: it has an 'aggressive' habit of flooding world markets with its goods and runs an embarrassing trade surplus with the US. Older right-wingers might even throw in a few references to Pearl Harbour. At a recent conference a US naval spokesperson explained how the US fleet could, if necessary, be mobilized at any given moment to open fire on Japanese cargo ships.

Failing foreign hate-campaigns, there are always civil-rights issues to attack back home – feminism, reproductive rights, and gay rights, for example. Anything which can be construed as a threat to the Family or the American Way of Life.

But these internal enemies will not serve the same purpose. It is much harder to whip up rip-roaring right-wing hysteria when the target is domestic and diffused. Only a foreign bugbear can do the trick. Without such a scapegoat the US will be left facing the fact that the world has changed – and that its own position as top dog is by no means assured.



Cartoon : Jim Needle

EAST AND SOUTH - THE FACTS

It is fashionable to say that the problems of the Eastern bloc mirror those of the developing world. But is it true?



TEACHER RATIOS¹
PRIMARY PUPIL TO

Country	Ratio
East Germany	16
USSR	17
Bulgaria	20
Albania	21
Romania	21
Czechoslovakia	21
Ghana	24
Bolivia	27
Afghanistan	37
Bangladesh	49
Ethiopia	49
Mozambique	63

SURVIVAL

People in Eastern Europe are likely to live much longer than people in most developing countries - and their children are several times more likely to survive their first five years.

LIFE EXPECTANCY¹

(US 76 years)

EAST:	
East Germany	74
Poland	72
Czechoslovakia	72
Bulgaria	72
Albania	72
Hungary	71
Romania	71
USSR	70
SOUTH:	
Brazil	65
India	59
Ghana	55
Bolivia	54
Bangladesh	52
Mozambique	47
Ethiopia	42
Afghanistan	42

CHILD MORTALITY¹

Deaths in first five years per 1,000 children (US 13)

EAST: Albania 34, USSR 32, Romania 28, Bulgaria 20, Hungary 19, Poland 18, Czechoslovakia 15, East Germany 12.

SOUTH: Afghanistan 300, Mozambique 298, Ethiopia 259, Bangladesh 188, Bolivia 172, India 149, Ghana 146, Brazil 85.

Photos: (clockwise starting top left) Melanie Friend/Format; Brenda Prince/Format; Michael Ann Mullen/Format; Brenda Prince/Format; Barry Lewis/Network; Brenda Prince/Format; Alfredo Muche/ AIM; Unicef; Melanie Friend; ILO.

ECONOMY

The economy of the Eastern bloc is a mess, mainly due to over-centralization, low productivity and poor supply systems. But the problems of the Third World remain much greater - and much more urgent.

● The USSR's GNP per capita is \$4,550 - a quarter of that of the US with \$18,530. But it is double that of one of the most industrially developed Third World countries, Brazil (\$2,020); eight times that of Bolivia (\$580), and 25 times that of Mozambique (\$170).¹

1 Human Development Report 1990 UNDP; 2 Squatter Citizen, J.E. Hardy and D. Satterthwaite (Earthscan 1989); 3 Urban Land and Shelter for the Poor, Patrick McAuslan (Earthscan 1986); 4 Quand soufflent les vents d'est, CCFD, Feb. 1990; 5 State of World Population 1990 UNFPA; 6 Second World, Third World, Peter Madden, in New Ground Summer 1990; 7 Toxic waste for a small planet, David Wei, in Consumer Lifelines (IOCU, April 1989); 8 Environment Brief No 2, UNEP 1988; 9 Levels and Trends in Contraceptive Use, UN 1989.

EDUCATION

The Eastern bloc provides its people with more education than the South can afford - more even than the West chooses to provide.

ADULT LITERACY RATE¹

(US 96%)

EAST:	
East Germany	99
USSR	99
Hungary	98
Czechoslovakia	98
Poland	98
Romania	96
Albania	85
SOUTH:	
Brazil	78
Bolivia	75
Ethiopia	66
Ghana	64
India	43
Mozambique	39
Bangladesh	33
Afghanistan	24

● In the USSR there is one doctor for every 22 people and in France one for every 31. In Brazil there is one doctor for every 111 people and in Bangladesh one for every 500.4

HEALTH CARE

● In the USSR there is one doctor for every 22 people and in France one for every 31. In Brazil there is one doctor for every 111 people and in Bangladesh one for every 500.4

ENVIRONMENT

Industrial pollution has destroyed Eastern Europe's environment and is ruining health...

● In Hungary every 17th death and every 24th disability can be attributed to air pollution.

● 88,000 children and 63,000 adults were treated for pollution-related lung diseases in the Romanian town of Giurgiu in just one year.¹

● In the Soviet Union 50 million people breathe air containing 10 times the pollutants allowed in Western Europe. Children in the city of Astrakhan have to go to school wearing gas masks.²

But the South has its problems too. Industrial pollution has risen 16-fold in the past 30 years...

● 90% of the population of Mexico City and 60% of the population of Calcutta suffer from respiratory diseases related to air pollution.

● About 125,000 tons of toxic waste are sent to the Third World from Europe each year.³ Attempts to clean up Eastern Europe will lead to yet more toxic waste being dumped on the Third World.

● The lives and livelihoods of 135 million people are threatened by desertification, mainly in the Sahel. This is expected to rise to 485 million people by the year 2000, as 60,000 sq km of land a year becomes desert and a further 214,000 sq km are so degraded that crop production becomes uneconomic. Global warming, caused largely by the consumption habits of the North, will speed up this process.

FOOD

● The average Eastern bloc resident may have to spend hours queuing to buy food but will, like the average Westerner, eventually consume 33% more calories per day than their body needs for survival.⁴

● The average Eastern bloc resident may have to spend hours queuing to buy food but will, like the average Westerner, eventually consume 33% more calories per day than their body needs for survival.⁴

SHelter

● The Eastern bloc have been guaranteed housing - and at fixed rents. Overcrowding and low quality of housing gives rise to complaints.

● About half the people in the Third World have no secure home of any sort.

BASIC NEEDS

The basic needs of Eastern Europeans are better met than those of the South.

MATERNAL MORTALITY
Deaths per 100,000 births, 1980-7 (US 8)

Country	Rate
Czechoslovakia	10
USSR	48
Brazil	120
Romania	150
Bolivia	480
Afghanistan	690
Ghana	1,000

● Around 75% per cent of women in the Eastern bloc use contraception.

tries about 45% of women use was outlawed in developing countries.

in Ceausescu's Romania abortion heavy reliance on abortion, though supplies. Scarcity results in a

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The human factor

The good news is the rich world is at last taking human rights into account when granting aid. The bad news is why. Rakiya Omaar and Richard Carver report.

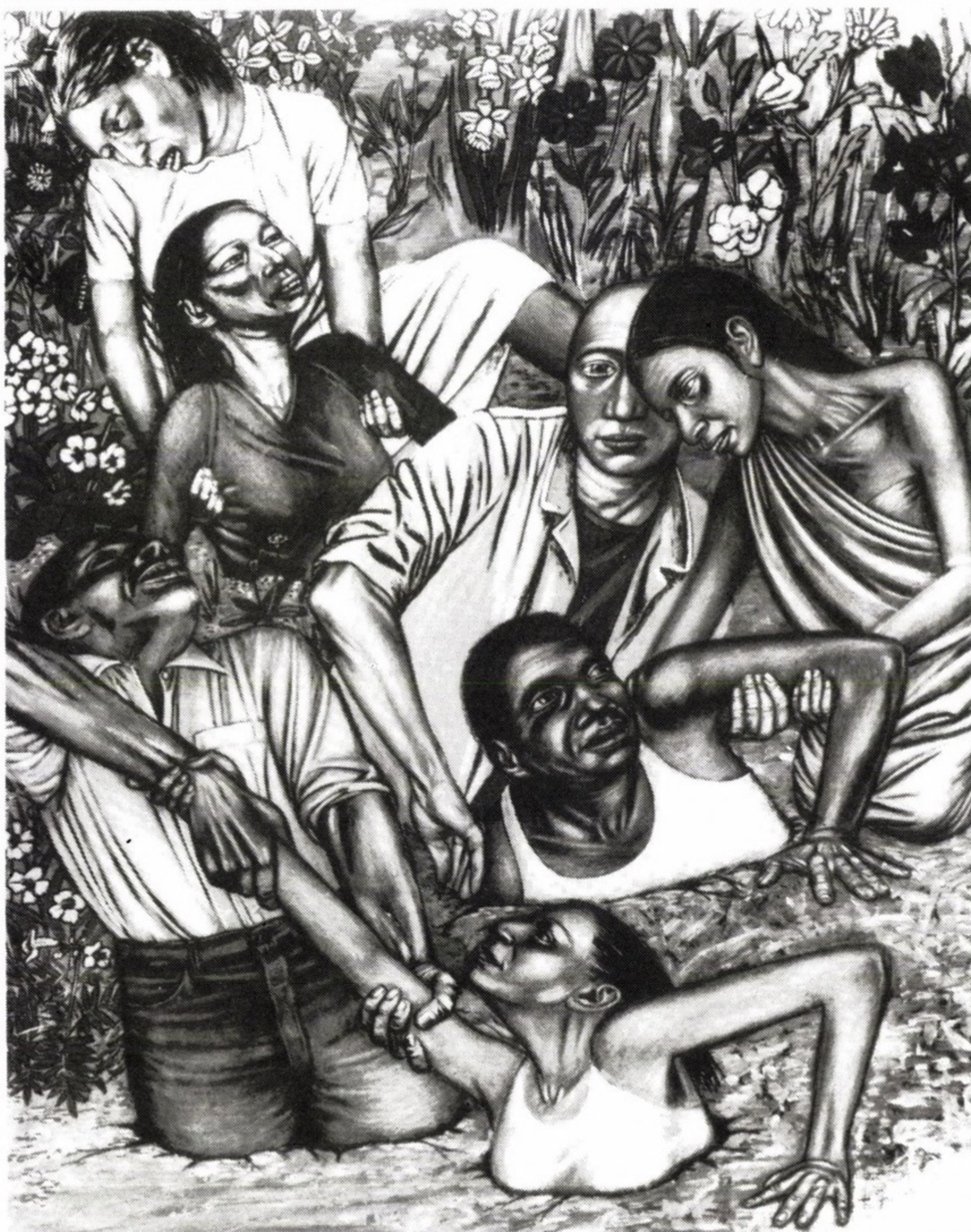


Illustration: Robin Harris/30 Images concerning the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

THANKS to the dramatic transformation of Eastern Europe there is a new and flourishing international vogue for human rights. Even regimes with appalling records – such as Malawi and Somalia – are rushing to ratify international human-rights treaties. Their desire for correctness has not, however, extended to practice.

Why this sudden flurry? The main reason is that human rights has recently entered the vocabulary of international aid donors in a big way – and is being used to justify policy changes that are being made for quite different reasons.

Take the recent statement from British

Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd: 'Countries tending towards pluralism, public accountability, respect for the rule of law, human rights and market principles should be encouraged. Governments who persist with repressive policies, with corrupt management, or with wasteful and discredited economic systems should not expect us to support their folly with scarce aid resources.'

Or the statement from French President François Mitterrand: 'France will link its contribution effort to the efforts accomplished to move towards more liberty'.

Or the Canadian Government's

announcement: 'Assistance offered to countries which have not demonstrated a commitment either to democracy or the open market is to be avoided'.

Now African campaigners regard Western concern about human rights as long overdue. But they are deeply sceptical about the motives of Western governments. Only weeks before delivering his homily, Mitterrand had sent French troops to Gabon – ostensibly to protect French nationals, but in reality to shore up the one-party regime of President Omar Bongo which was facing widespread popular protests.

This pattern has been repeated throughout French-speaking Africa, with corrupt governments kept in power by French development aid and budgetary support as well as large contingents of French troops.

The UK also has a fine record of hypocrisy when it comes to human rights. In the mid-1980s Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher visited Poland and publicly upbraided the government over its human-rights record. At the time the Polish Government held one political prisoner, according to Amnesty International.

Shortly afterwards Thatcher visited Kenya – a one-party state where political prisoners are tortured and sentenced after show trials and where independent organization is crushed. She singled out President Daniel arap Moi for praise, saying that he 'is just as concerned at any abuses of human rights as anyone else would be'. Shortly before her visit two observers from a human-rights organization attempted to attend the inquest of a political detainee who had died in custody. They were arrested and expelled from the country for 'unauthorized note-taking'.

Days before Thatcher's visit, Kenya had almost started a war with neighbouring Uganda because the latter had decided to save scarce foreign exchange by sending its exports by rail rather than road. This had angered senior Government ministers – who happened to own the Kenyan trucking companies.

Kenya, then, appears to fulfil a number of Hurd's criteria for having its aid cut off: it is repressive, corrupt, wasteful. There is no pluralism, public accountability or respect for human rights or the rule of law. However, 'market principles' rule and it is this, presumably, which differentiates Kenya from Eastern Europe.

Malawi was a port of call on Thatcher's next African trip. Now Malawi has been a one-party state since 1966 and exhibits many of the worst features of that kind of system. Ordinary Malawians need a Party card in order to board a bus or enter a market. Those who refuse are likely to be imprisoned or otherwise persecuted. Dozens of detainees are held without charge on political, religious or ethnic grounds.

Yet Mrs Thatcher refused to criticize

the human-rights record of President Kamuzu Banda. And donors are not put off by Banda's accumulation of a vast personal fortune through corruption. Malawi has received regular aid and investment from the UK, West Germany and the World Bank.

A recent \$70-million World Bank loan to Malawi carried various economic policy conditions but none on human rights. The World Bank is not allowed to be influenced by human-rights considerations in its lending, although it is increasingly concerned with what it calls 'governance'.

Of course Malawi, like Kenya, has a fiercely anti-communist government which is strongly aligned with the West in matters of foreign policy and economics. For many years Banda was South Africa's principal ally in the region at a time when the front-line states were urging the West to implement sanctions against Pretoria. This explains much.

And despite the West's recent rhetorical outbursts there is little reason to believe that its attitude to human rights in Africa is likely to change. They are simply responding to three developments.

The first is that changes in Eastern Europe have created a need to release funds for aid programmes which will be beneficial to Western investors. Already some technical experts attached to aid programmes in Africa have been transferred to Eastern Europe.

The second is a growing sentiment, especially in France, that donors are not getting sufficient return for their assistance. Recently a senior French official, writing under a pen-name in *Le Monde*, complained that African governments were accepting French aid and spending it on Japanese goods.

The third factor is the emergence of popular democratic opposition within African countries. In recent weeks we have seen an attempt to overthrow President Kenneth Kaunda in the one-party state of Zambia and courageous criticism of the Moi regime in Kenya. Eastern Europe has taught the West how quickly governments can be toppled by popular opposition and the current talk about human rights is a way of hedging bets – of keeping in with tomorrow's possible rulers as well as today's.

The constant sub-text of Western statements on human rights is that political freedoms can only be guaranteed by a capitalist economy. Africa has tyrannies of both right and left, but it is usually only the latter who come in for criticism.

Similarly, the awkward truth is that recent protests in Ivory Coast and Zambia were prompted by precisely the IMF-style economic measures which the West wishes to see adopted. Western leaders say nothing about Gani Fawehinmi, the Nigerian human-rights lawyer imprisoned last year for criticizing his country's structural adjustment programme, or Kempton

Makamure, the Zimbabwean lecturer detained for criticizing his government's new open-door investment code.

This is not an argument against linking aid to human-rights considerations – merely for greater consistency. Such pressure can be used effectively to benefit the victims of human-rights violations. In 1983, for example, Sweden suspended aid to Zimbabwe until its army stopped the massacre of civilians in the Matabeleland region. In May 1990 Belgium announced the suspension of aid to Zaire after elite presidential guards had massacred protesting students in Lubumbashi – a move which could prove as effective as the Swedish one. Similarly in recent months the US has frozen all non-emergency aid to the Somali Government, which is engaged in a genocidal war against large sections of its own population.

What these examples have in common is that the donor countries were closely allied with the governments committing abuses of human rights. It is easy for a government to lecture its enemies on the virtue of good behaviour. It is much more difficult but twice as effective to adopt the same approach with one's friends.

More than 40 African governments

have now endorsed the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, drafted by the Organisation of African Unity after the fall in 1979 of Idi Amin, Jean-Bedel Bokassa and Macias Nguema. Yet the very same governments daily violate this Charter, which guarantees the basic civil rights of both individuals and communities. It is not unreasonable to expect African governments to adhere to human-rights standards that they themselves have drawn up.

But the blanket approach signalled by Hurd, Mitterrand and the Canadian Government is not likely to be effective. Its intention is less to improve respect for human rights than to reshape their own aid programmes.

A better approach would be to make help in specific programmes like military or police training conditional upon specific improvements such as the release of political prisoners, the legalization of opposition parties and, of course, an end to torture. □

Rakiya Omaar is Executive Director and Richard Carver Research Director of Africa Watch, a non-governmental body monitoring African governments' adherence to internationally-agreed human-rights standards.

VIEWPOINT: AID



The aid charade

IN recent months we have heard Western government ministers, World Bank experts, IMF officials and all manner of Eurocrats strenuously claiming that aid to Eastern Europe does not mean less aid for the Third World.

At best this is nonsense – at worst deception. It does not take an economic wizard to tell you that if a sum of money is going in one direction it is not going in the other. Consider the following:

- The US cut its economic support to Latin America from \$545 million to \$350 million this year to allow for emergency injections of cash to Eastern Europe.

- The British aid budget to the Third World has fallen by 20 per cent since 1980. The UK now provides more funds for Poland than for India which has seen its foreign aid cut by one-third since 1988.

- Poland and Hungary alone will receive \$20 per capita from the EC in the next three years. This compares with just two dollars a head for sub-Saharan Africa over the next

five years according to the Lomé Convention, a trade-and-aid pact between the EC and 66 Third World countries.

- The IMF is providing \$400 billion more cash. Half of it will underwrite short-term capital lending and debt relief to Eastern Europe, on condition that the Fund is more stringent in collecting the four billion dollars owed by 11 developing countries. This could result in cuts of aid flow to the poorest, most indebted nations.

- Canada has announced aid of US\$115 million to Eastern Europe. Meanwhile its aid to the Third World has stagnated and is at its lowest in GNP terms for years.

- Australia has given Eastern Europe a one-off grant of four million US dollars out of its foreign-aid budget – but has since decided it is strongly opposed to the diversion of aid from Third World countries.

Government-to-government aid has always been political – and will continue

to be so. The difference today is that aid is ruled by the prevailing market ideology. The needs of recipients take second place as donors demand value for money. If they think they will get a better return by directing aid East rather than South then they will do so. Aid is investment: more shamelessly now than ever before.





Perishtroika, mon amour

It was all peace and love when Bush and Gorbachev recently agreed to throw away more of their missiles. But how does the East-West thaw look in India where the prospect of war looms larger daily? Kishu Singh and Dilip Bobb report.

THEY may be doing the lambada in Lithuania and boogieing in Berlin but there is a flip side to the democratization disc. Hallucinogenic euphoria greeted the 'If-it's-Tuesday-it-must-be-Romania' revolution that brought the walls of Eastern Europe tumbling down. But the fall-out effect on the Third World may well not be so pretty.

The past two decades have already seen a massive militarization of the developing world. Weaponry is as addictive as cocaine for Third World generals, dictators or over-ambitious politicians. The global trade in major weapons was worth approximately \$31 billion last year with the Third World being the major customer. And of the 32 armed conflicts recorded in 1989 (ranging from Lebanon to Sikh terrorism in India and Tamil guerillas in Sri Lanka), almost all were located in Third World countries.

Now, with the Cold War in decline, the temptation for Northern governments to dump excess military hardware on the South has increased alarmingly. So, equally, has the temptation for Third World countries to boost their military muscle by buying up the goodies available at bargain-basement prices.

For them, détente between the military alliances of West and East could prove to be something of an arms windfall. Western Europe, with its highly developed weapons industry, will be increasingly wooing customers in the Third World. It would certainly rather do that than fire the hundreds of thousands currently employed in the arms business in countries like Sweden, Britain, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, France and Spain.

Meanwhile, the rise in tension in some regions of the Third World can only accelerate that process. Nothing illustrates this better than the current state of affairs between India and Pakistan. The two prickly neighbours have fought three wars since they gained independence in 1947 and are currently a hair-trigger away from indulging in a fourth, this one more mutually destructive than ever before.

The superpowers have inevitably been sucked into this conflict. The US has always viewed Pakistan as a front-line strategic ally, more so in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Similarly,

the traditionally chummy relations between India and the Soviet Union have made it impossible for Moscow to remain neutral. So Pakistan has received sophisticated military hardware from the US while India has enjoyed similar access to the latest Soviet military technology.

The superpowers may now have new priorities. But it is probably too late. Both Pakistan and India have raised the stakes over Kashmir to such dangerous levels



Tension rising on the Indo-Pakistan border.

that, even if war itself is averted, the threat of war has spurred both sides into ensuring their quivers are over-stocked. The result: a panicked arms-buying spree that shows no sign of slowing down despite the fact that both countries are strapped for cash.

Islamabad's current arms shopping list includes 50 Mirage 111s in mint condition from Australia at the throwaway price of one million dollars each; 18 F-16 aircraft and 775 armoured personnel carriers from the US; and both M-9 ballistic missiles and F-7 combat aircraft from China. Furthermore, a high-powered delegation recently visited the UK and Spain to discuss purchase of frontline NATO weaponry on favourable (credit) terms.

New Delhi is not exactly sitting on its hands (or arms). Indian armed forces have indulged in a flurry of panic purchases ranging from tank track links to the 60,000 130 mm shells it has just bought from Eastern Europe with hard currency. It is also shopping for AA7 missiles for its frontline Mig-29 combat aircraft, and there are signs that New Delhi may add a second Soviet-built nuclear submarine to its already formidable naval fleet. The one already in service is nuclear powered but carries conventional warheads.

Most alarming, however, is the fact that both countries have nuclear capabilities. India has already staged a peaceful explosion of an atomic bomb and Pakistan, by its own admission, has a nuclear bomb in the basement. Both countries could produce a nuclear arsenal in a matter of weeks, if not days, were the situation to get out of control.

Recently, the *New York Times* revealed that US spy satellites had picked up disturbing signals that Islamabad was setting its nuclear option in motion. Pakistan Air Force F-16s had been photographed with nuclear bomb racks. There were also satellite pictures of military convoys heading out from Pakistan's nuclear facility at Kahuta to forward bases located near the Indian border.

Both sides have developed missiles and launchers capable of reaching long-distance targets and carrying nuclear warheads. Since neither Islamabad nor New Delhi are signatories to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), there is little the major powers can do to avert the danger of a conventional conflict snowballing into a nuclear one.

That is a scenario which could as well apply to other tension-filled regions of the developing world. Thus, while the North basks under the pleasing prospect of peace and perestroika, for areas of the Third World, the outcome could well be perishtroika. □

Kishu Singh is a Professor in International Affairs in New Delhi. She specializes in defence matters. Dilip Bobb writes for the monthly magazine, *India Today*.

VIEWPOINT : ARMS



Guns and butter

THE world spends \$1,168 billion a year – more than the income of half the world's population – on war and preparing for war. NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries have accounted for 83 per cent of this spending since 1960. With the end of the Cold War there is no excuse for continuing this absurdity. The two sides have already agreed arms cuts – but the process will have to continue through the 1990s with swingeing cuts worldwide.

This should produce the so-called 'peace dividend'. A saving of \$467 billion per year could be made by halving East-West military spending. This money could be spent on



development in the South and the East, tackling global problems of pollution and environmental degradation, and repairing the damaged social and educational infrastructure of the West.

But there is strong resistance from the overgrown military-industrial complex. Even before recent arms-reduction agreements between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, trade-union estimates suggested a 40-per-cent over-capacity in the European arms industry.

Over-production in the North has resulted in a drive to export arms to the South. It has worked only too well. Since 1960 arms spending has doubled in the North, but increased sixfold in the South. One of the biggest dangers now is that arms no longer needed in Europe will be sold off cheap to the Third World. It is therefore crucial that all these arms are destroyed.

More than that, Northern arms industries must diversify their activities and convert to producing non-military goods. Conversion, although initially required on a large scale by the North, is also needed in the South. Brazil, China and India, for example, have booming arms industries. But changes in the South are extremely unlikely unless Northern arms cuts are great.

The Dollar Quadrille

(AN IRON CURTAIN RAISER)



Will you walk a little faster said the Eagle to the Bear
There's a Toyota right behind me and it drives me to despair.
See how eagerly our Levis and MacDonalds all advance
They are geared up for a killing – will you come and join the dance?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, won't you join the dance?

'You really have no notion how delightful it will be
When there's nothing left but NATO subs beneath the seven seas.
But the Bear replied, 'Too far, too far,' and gave a look askance
Said it thanked the Eagle kindly, but it would not join the dance .
Would not, could not, would not, could not, would not join
the dance.
Would not, could not, would not, could not, could not join
the dance

'What matters it how far you go', his feathery friend replied
'There are many shores to plunder upon the Third World side.
Send them all your toxic rubbish and grab your only chance.
Turn not fair, beloved Bear – just come and join the dance.
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, won't you join
the dance?'

(With profound apologies to Lewis Carroll)

Simply... Sparks from Eastern

UNITED STATES

Economic problems loom large for US. Huge deficit and tough competition from Germany and Japan.

CENTRAL AMERICA

US invasion of Panama launches more aggressive policy towards Central America. Soviet disapproval counts for nothing.

AFRICA

Aid for and interest in Africa dwindling. But one-party-state systems threatened as popular demand for political plurality grows.

LATIN AMERICA

More industrialized countries like Brazil may find new markets in the East. But protectionism in the united Europe could be a threat.

Europe - where will they fall ?

USSR

Soviet economic reconstruction will take 50 years, experts say, and will cost billions of dollars. Will capitalism provide?

CHINA

Heavy government repression. But ingredients for Eastern European-style revolution there – including nascent ethnic unrest.

AFGHANISTAN

Western support for Mujahedin rebels is waning. Victory against Soviet-backed government now unlikely.

JAPAN

New investment opportunities in the changed world but more hostility from the US. Japan's rearmament lobby may grow as a result.

ETHIOPIA

Mengistu regime in serious trouble. Soviet bloc has withdrawn support, army is demoralized and rebel groups are winning the war.

INDO-CHINA

Pol Pot's dreaded Khmer Rouge at last ditched by US – but already poised to take over the country. US opens belated dialogue with Vietnam.

INDIA/PAKISTAN

Border tensions running high, not helped by arms race. Conditions ripe for war.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Cuts in Soviet aid and support lead to more poverty and hunger in Mozambique and Angola.

PACIFIC

Fearing regional instability Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore are increasing their defence budgets.



ALLIES

The Dalai Lama and the Playwright

**What's happening in Tibet? Who knows? Who cares?
Eastern Europeans do, as Catriona Bass discovers.**



Trouble in Tibet, revolution in Romania – and solidarity in the making.



They know what it is when we talk of persecution. People in the West are wrong to believe that the East Europeans were just fighting for more consumer goods. They are more idealistic than Westerners.'

For people in Eastern Europe, so long subjected to the violent politics of totalitarian regimes, the Dalai Lama's unswerving adherence to a campaign of nonviolence has enormous appeal.

But the interest in Tibet among intellectuals in Eastern Europe predates the new politics. Last July, I had supper with some Romanian friends in Bucharest. We whispered about Tibetan Buddhism beneath the noise of Mahler's Fifth Symphony which we played to confuse the secret police bugs. I was the only one who hadn't read *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, an esoteric text on the period between life and rebirth.

Tibet now finds itself the unexpected beneficiary of these intellectual quests made by Europe's new leaders. In Prague the Dalai Lama led a meditation session for Vaclav Havel and his ministers. Sasha Neumann, one of the President's closest aides, revealed that he had been a follower of Tibetan Buddhism for many years.

The Dalai Lama is clearly encouraged by this recognition. Speaking at the European Parliament in April – his first official invitation to speak to a parliament in Europe – he made his optimism clear. 'In the early 1960s when we carried the freedom struggle through nonviolence many people thought we were too idealistic. Now I have found more comrades who have a policy of nonviolence. This is a great inspiration for us.'

But what about Tibetans inside Tibet? At the beginning of May, after more than a year, the authorities lifted martial law in

THE pages of the world's press were smeared with screaming faces, wounded bodies, fists raised in defiance. The Chinese security police had opened fire on unarmed demonstrators.

I am not referring to the massacre in Tiananmen Square but to an event that took place two years earlier – and not in China but in Tibet. On 1 October 1987 Tibetans saw the biggest nationalist demonstrations for 20 years against the Chinese who occupied their country in 1959. Western governments were temporarily forced to take notice. They found it easy to forget again.

Tibetans did not. Dissent has spread throughout society. The authorities have had to resort to the draconian methods of Mao to maintain stability and control. Hundreds of protesters are being held without trial. Those released report the use of torture to obtain confessions. There are other reports of summary executions. And in March last year more unarmed demonstrators were shot.

In spite of glaring evidence of human-rights abuses in Tibet – and events in China itself – Western governments have reopened dialogue and trade channels with Beijing. Brent Scowcroft, one of President Bush's top advisers, described China's leaders as 'friends' with whom 'our important dialogue' must be resumed. Britain's Margaret Thatcher refuses to meet Tibet's leader-in-exile, the Dalai Lama (who holds the Nobel Peace

Prize) because, she says, 'the interests of Hong Kong have to be taken into account'. This habit of treating China as if it were a world apart suits the West – and it suits China's leaders, clinging to power as tyrannies crumble around them.

The moral vigour of Eastern Europe's new democrats makes for a striking contrast. One of the most unexpected developments of their own revolutions is that they have taken the lead in raising international concern over Tibet.

The idealism of the East

The Dalai Lama was one of the first foreign dignitaries to be invited to Czechoslovakia after Vaclav Havel became its President. Leaders in Hungary were quick to follow suit and now the Poles and Bulgarians have extended invitations to the Tibetan leader for the autumn. The foreign minister of Tibet's government-in-exile, Lodi Gyari, visited Estonia and Lithuania. Talks with Lithuania's President Vytautas Landsbergis resulted in an agreement to help each other as 'the position of Tibet and Baltic states was the same'.

The boldness of Vaclav Havel and the Hungarian leaders stems, perhaps, from their own hard-won freedom. The fate of Tibet has a special resonance for them. According to Lodi Gyari: 'People in the West don't know what democracy is because they never lost it. But in Eastern Europe they understand our language.

Lhasa. But there is little sign as yet of life improving. Soldiers have disappeared from the streets only to be replaced by units of armed police. On 24 May two men were executed for attempting to escape from prison; demonstrators who protested against this were warned that they would be punished 'with the iron fist of the people's democratic dictatorship'.

Lost dogs

It remains to be seen whether recognition of the Dalai Lama by Eastern Europe can be more than a symbolic gesture. More important for Tibetans inside Tibet is how China might be affected by events in Eastern Europe.

It was Romania's revolution that hit China hardest. The fall of Ceausescu sent China's geriatric leaders into a frenzied building of defences. Only weeks earlier, during a visit by Romania's dictator, China's media had presented the two countries as the last bastions of socialism in a traitorous world.

On 21 December, as pro-democracy demonstrators went onto the streets of Bucharest, Jiang Zemin, the General Secretary of China's Communist Party,

went on Beijing Radio. 'China is very different from Eastern Europe,' he declared. But behind the rhetoric the army was being put on first-category alert – the highest state of military preparedness.

The Chinese leaders tried to draw attention away from events in Europe by talking of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' and reviving the works of Confucius and Mao. But on the streets of Beijing citizens let off fireworks in celebration of the death of Ceausescu.

In February China's leaders, fearful of wavering loyalties in its two armed forces, increased political control. Taking a lesson from the Romanian Revolution – during which the Army and the Securitate had fought each other – the Chinese Government brought together the Army and the People's Armed Police under a single leadership.

It is difficult to know how much ordinary people in China and Tibet knew of Eastern Europe's revolutions; but it was enough, it seems, to have made the leaders tremble. When it was believed that Ceausescu was heading for China, a poster went up at Beijing University describing the dictator as 'a lost dog

ACTION

The following groups are keeping an eye on ways in which East-West detente is affecting the Third World and campaigning in response.

AUSTRALIA — The Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA), GPO Box 1562, Canberra 2601, Tel (062) 47 4822. Represents NGOs and is an effective lobbyist for promoting Third World focus and increase of aid.

CANADA — The Canadian Council for International Co-operation, ODA Campaign, 1 Nicholas St., Ste 300, Ottawa K1N 7B7. Tel (613) 236 4547

UNITED KINGDOM — The World Development Movement (WDM) at 25 Beehive Place, London SW9 7QR. Tel (071) 737 6215. Have produced a set of excellent papers: *Beyond 1992* by Ed Mayo, June 1989. *Real security – East, West, North, South* by Geoff Tansey, July 1990, and *The Second and Third World – the effect of changes in Eastern Europe on the Third World*, by Ed Mayo, September 1990. All available from WDM at £1.50 each.

UNITED STATES — The Development Group for Alternative Policies (Development GAP), 1400 1 Street N.W., Suite 520, Washington DC 20005. Tel (202) 898 1566.

coming to join China's four dogs'.

There are also signs that the events in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have affected ethnic minorities within China. The Uighur people of north-west China are now demonstrating for the independence of what they call East Turkestan. And the authorities are becoming increasingly agitated, as China's Mongolians look northwards and see the growing democracy enjoyed by their kinsfolk in the Mongolian People's Republic and the USSR.

But the events of the past year have shown that Tibetans and Uighurs – and even China's pro-democracy students – present a minimal threat to the might of the People's Liberation Army.

The Chinese people's faith in their Communist Party may have been shattered by its brutality – its central tenet ('the Chinese Communist Party represents the fundamental interests of the Chinese people') was crushed by the tanks on Tiananmen Square. But it will certainly take longer for Chinese people to question the treatment of ethnic minorities: the Party has for too long inculcated in them the superiority of Chinese culture.

Change will come when Deng Xiaoping dies, but it will not necessarily lead to democracy. Even if it does, this will not yet mean independence for Tibet, according to the Paris-based Federation For a Democratic China.

But with questions of national self-determination being debated throughout the world, young Chinese exiles are at least becoming aware of the issue. It's a start. □

Catriona Bass is a Tibetan specialist. She lived in Lhasa from 1985 to 1986. Her account of this period, *Inside the Treasure House*, has just been published by Victor Gollancz.

VIEWPOINT : ALLIES



Speaking terms

WHAT do Hungary and Mexico have in common? Or Poland and Chile? Not much, you might have thought. But since the raising of the Iron Curtain Latin Americans and Eastern Europeans have had a chance to compare notes and find parallels.

Relationships are being struck up – mainly at an informal cultural or academic level. But the end result could have an international impact. For example, the Mexicans with their set of skilful manoeuvres for renegotiating debts with foreign banks and finance institutions could teach the more pedestrian Hungarian debtors a lesson or two.

Meanwhile the entry of Eastern European countries into international market-based trading systems is having a positive spin-off for Third World countries. In the past agreements to stabilize or bolster prices of Third World commodities have failed because of the unwillingness of Eastern Europeans to co-operate. Chances of success are greater now. And democrats such as Vaclav Havel have already been

questioning in international fora the morality of the way in which the rich world treats the Third World.

Opportunities for East-South trade look brighter. The banana-exporting countries of Latin America, for example, foresee a doubling of sales to Eastern Europe, with East Germany and Poland the most promising markets. Colombian coffee-growers are eyeing up the Soviet market. Meanwhile Hungary's Dunjvaros iron-and-steel plant has already been persuaded to buy its pallets from India rather than the USSR.

Newly industrialized countries such as South Korea may find larger markets for consumer goods – especially if they are geographically close to the USSR. But less developed Third World countries may find themselves in competition with Eastern Europe as it increases its exports of agricultural produce, textiles and clothing to Western Europe.

One thing is certain – the East and the South can at least talk to each other now. Their grassroots organizations – be they active on ecology or human rights – will find that they have much in common. Relationships between individual Eastern and Southern countries are likely to be more flexible and respectful – no longer overshadowed by the imperialistic ambitions of the USSR.



Photo: Jenny Matthews/Christian Aid



Vulnerable: harvest of lavender grass for medical project in Esteli.

NICARAGUA

U-turn

Uncertain future for development

SIX months ago travellers in Nicaragua, hearing that the Contras were on the road again, would have dived for cover or quickly made a U-turn. Now, with the U-turn of Nicaraguan politics, the Contras are part of the political and geographical landscape, moving back into old homes, claiming new territory, arguing for the

political rewards they see as rightfully theirs.

The ground-rules have changed in Nicaragua since the election of Violeta Chamorro's National Coalition Union (UNO) government in February. The Contras are now dominant on the Atlantic Coast and in Region Five in the centre of the country – and they have been given their own 60-square-kilometre farm.

Days after the election a group of US AID officials arrived to advise the new administration. For the first time the Inter-American Development

Bank has appeared on the scene. The US Government has promised \$300 million in aid. Conservative US development agencies have also set up shop – a sign, some observers say, of an ideological shift which will tilt Nicaragua firmly to the right and undo the advances of the Sandinista era.

Thus far, fears of a total 'roll-back' have not been realized. With 40 per cent of the vote, the Sandinistas kept their clout in the National Assembly as the largest single party. Divisions within the UNO coalition of 14 parties have also held conflict at bay, leading to what some see as cautious government policies – and others as fumbling and incoherent ones.

But for a number of reasons the future looks ominous. After the May civil-service strike, the Government rushed through new legislation banning strikes in state institutions and allowing the sacking of top-level state employees – in essence, introducing a return to Somoza-era labour law.

Agrarian reform, the most important of the Sandinistas' achievements, is being whittled away. Peasant land is being left untouched but fallow land and state farms are in danger of being reappropriated.

What does all this mean for development? The British

voluntary aid agencies that put money into Sandinista Nicaragua are sitting tight. They continue to fund existing projects, but the prevailing attitude is 'wait and see'.

With the economy on its knees, and an IMF austerity package looming on the horizon, the key question is money. One issue is political – what will government priorities be, given scarce resources? The other is simply whether there will be enough.

First for the chop would be large state-funded projects such as the nationwide water project, a joint venture between the Nicaraguan Water Authority and agencies such as Christian Aid and Oxfam. If completed, the project would make Nicaragua the only Third World country to provide clean water to its entire rural population.

But most vulnerable are smaller projects, whose future could be utterly reshaped by a shift to a Thatcherite free-market economy. Without government financial backing or current prohibitions on land parcelization, for instance, rural co-operatives could easily decline. Some experts predict that their numbers will halve in the next few years.

Sarah Stewart/Christian Aid

PHILIPPINES

Threats

Human-rights lawyers in danger

ON 22 May this year staff at the office of human-rights lawyer Solema Jubilan in Kidapawan, North Cotabato province, reportedly received five anonymous death threats. Most of them threatened Solema Jubilan (who was featured in the recent NI issue on the Philippines) and her family with death and promised to blow up her office. One said: 'If I were you, I'd leave right now. The place where you are standing will explode any minute.'

The threats came shortly after the publication of an article on 12 May in the *Mindanao Cross* in which an unnamed military source alleged that the Children of the War Center run by Jubilan is a front for the fundraising activities of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Jubilán set up the Centre in

1989 to provide for children orphaned by war. The article quoted a source 'based in Cotabato province' as saying that 'a cause-orientated group has been raising funds for the communist movement by exploiting children'. Workers at the orphanage say they have known for some time that they and the orphanage have been watched by the authorities.

Amnesty International believes that these threats and the allegations may be intended to prevent Jubilan continuing with her work on behalf of the poor and under-privileged, with workers involved in strike action and especially with alleged or suspected opponents of the government. She has received threats on numerous occasions since 1986 when she found the message 'It would be nice to kill you' inscribed on her office door.

At that time she was handling a highly-publicized case in which several church figures who had been active on human rights were accused of rape. The

charges were later dismissed as malicious. In 1987 soldiers in a local military camp were reported to have threatened to 'punish' her after accusing her of belonging to the New People's Army



Sol Jubilan: threats since 1986.

(NPA) and branding her 'Commander Sol'.

Threats intensified in 1988/9 when she handled a case involving 250 urban poor families whose houses were demolished on the orders of the local mayor. The families have filed a lawsuit for 12 million pesos.

In recent months there has been an upsurge in killings by the military or by military-backed paramilitary forces. Amnesty International believes that the naming of lawful non-governmental organizations as 'fronts' places the members of these organizations in serious danger. Since 1987 at least six human-rights lawyers have been killed, of whom three had been active in the defence of human rights and in reporting armed-forces abuses. Many more human-rights lawyers have received death threats.

Contact Amnesty International for more information on Urgent Action. See NI 205 (March 1990), Page 24 for more information on Sol Jubilan.

Photo: Peter Stalker

FINANCE

Smokescreen

CIA involvement in US savings bank scandal

A HUGE financial scandal is rocking the United States. Taxpayers face a bill of as much as \$500 billion, more than the combined foreign debt of Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, to bail out Savings and Loans institutions. Leading politicians, both Democrats and Republicans, are involved in the scandal – and so is the CIA.

Savings and Loans institutions were set up in the US in the 1930s following the Wall Street Crash and massive losses for depositors in financial institutions. The S&Ls, as they are known, were supposed to be safe havens for sober investment in home ownership – like the UK Building Societies. The Federal Government guaranteed deposits up to \$100,000. But the Reagan administration 'deregulated' the institutions, allowing them to invest where they liked, while keeping the guarantees in place. So the fraudsters moved in.

As the scandal unfolds there is growing evidence of CIA involvement. The CIA may have used part of the proceeds from S&L fraud to help pay for covert operations and other activities that Congress was unwilling to support publicly – such as the contras in Nicaragua. The Houston Post has discovered that all of the 22 failed S&Ls in Texas made loans to people with links to organized crime, the CIA or both. There is also evidence of CIA intervention with its own 'operatives' accused of S&L fraud.

'It's like trying to grab smoke', says Lloyd Monroe, a former prosecutor with the Justice Department.

There is no clear picture of where the money went. Only a small proportion can have gone into the lavish lifestyles of the S&L fraudsters.

So vast are the sums involved that there is a real threat of financial chaos in the US. George Bush himself was Vice-President when the Reagan Administration deregulated the S&Ls – and his son, Neil, is the subject of disciplinary action by federal bank regulators following the collapse of a bank of which he was a director. The scandal seems likely to run and run.

David Ransom



Sri Lankans engulfed by violence.

SRI LANKA

Bloodbath

Threat of civil war looms as killings mount

THE spectacular violence and visibility of the Tamil-Sinhala war from the early 1980s onwards made almost everyone ignore the divisions between the Sinhalese themselves. Suddenly, overnight, in mid-1987 the Sinhalese were killing each other

and few understood why.

As long as they had a common enemy to fight, the Sinhalese were, or appeared to be, united. But as soon as the Indian-Sri Lankan Accord of July 1987 opened the doors to a possible peace settlement with the Tamils, the Sinhalese broke ranks and turned upon each other.

The conflict between Sinhalese and Tamils may have its roots in ethnicity, religion and language but it currently finds its expression in a complex variety of very violent altercations where Tamils are also killing Tamils, Sinhalese kill Sinhalese, the security forces kill without restraint in the south, and the Indian Peace Keeping Force, the Eelam People's Revolutionary Front and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam kill individuals and groups in the north and east.

Hard facts and explanations are scarce, but a recent report by International Alert¹ lists several hundred killings by government and opposition forces between August 1987 and September 1989. There were no fewer than

300,000 small arms in private hands in the South in mid-1989, according to the Colombo District Citizen's Committee.

The author of the Report, Eduardo Mariño, concludes that 'the killings are *not* the necessary product of socio-economic factors... There is a clear *political* responsibility on the part of the Government and groups in opposition... As the spate of assassinations engulfs larger groups of people in more places, the possibility of fully-fledged civil war looms clearly on the horizon...

'Unless the right to freedom from wanton political attack and repression is secured, no less than from economic need and exploitation, the strife will destroy both the economic designs and the political power of the President and the Government. By responding to terrorism with state terrorism as it does, the Government is conceding its own claim to respect.'

David Ransom

¹ *Political Killings in Southern Sri Lanka*, International Alert, 379-381 Brixton Road, London SW9 7DE, UK.

TRANSPORT

Full steam

Massive investment planned in Indian railways

THE world's second biggest rail network, and Asia's largest, is steaming ahead at full speed with ambitious modernization plans.

The architect of the scheme is George Fernandes, Railways Minister and former President of the All-India Railwaymen's Federation, the biggest trade union in the country. He is a tough man who in 1973 led the longest railway strike in history. Now he wants to expand and modernize the railway to enable it to cope with the projected doubling of demand on the system in the next ten years.

To overhaul and revamp the system, staff at the Railway Ministry in New Delhi are busy arranging to import equipment worth \$560 million. Their shopping list includes 40 new high-powered diesel locomotives. The contract includes technology-transfer clauses to allow for local manufacturing in the future.

The empire of Indian Railways spreads over 61,976 kilometres of track and generates

over \$6,000 million in revenue, providing employment for over 1.7 million people. Despite running 11,270 trains, connecting 7,093 stations and carrying 10 million passengers a day, Indian Railways had only 545 accidents last year. This works out at 0.9 accidents per million train-kilometres, the lowest in railroad history.

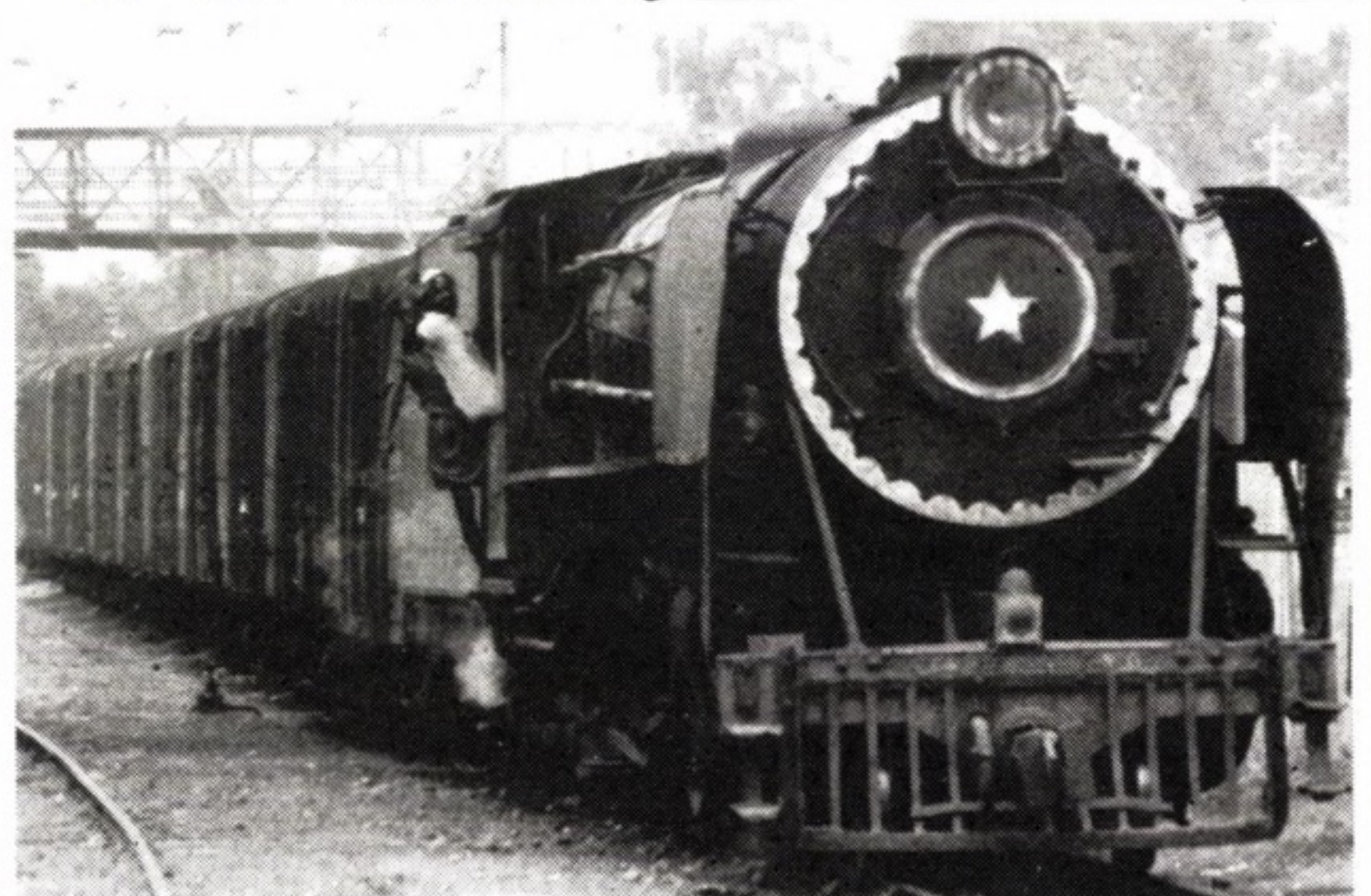
New rolling stock is being tested on the most difficult lines in the country. A full-scale effort is being made to improve speeds at which both passenger and freight trains run and to replace antiquated meter-gauge track with modern broad gauge.

To ease overcrowding

Fernandes has stopped the manufacture of new first-class and air-conditioned coaches. He has promised to run more Janata Trains (People's Expresses) rather than concentrate on 'bullet trains' for the rich as in the past. The network is also being expanded in hilly isolated areas.

To raise money for these projects hard-currency loans have been negotiated with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. The Government has issued bonds worth six million dollars. And, predictably, fares have gone up.

A J Singh/Gemini



The age of steam may soon be over for Asia's biggest railway.

ROYALTY

Poll-tax perk

The world's richest woman, Queen Elizabeth II, has become even richer now that the poll tax has replaced rates on property. She is exempt from poll tax whereas she used to pay rates on her homes.

Last year she saved £5,698 (\$9,400) on her 50,000 acre Balmoral estate in Scotland. This year she will save another £12,000 (\$21,500) on her Sandringham estate in Norfolk. In all the Queen and the rest of the royal family will save over £50,000 (\$80,000) a year.

There are other royal anomalies. Take Prince Charles. His butler, Harold Brown, will pay £15 (\$27) more than the Prince. For he lives in Kensington Palace and will pay the charge of £278 (\$500) Kensington and Chelsea Council have decided to levy. But the Prince has decided to



make Highgrove his official residence for poll-tax purposes. There he will only pay £263 (\$473) a year to Stroud Council.

From Land and Liberty, Vol 97 No 1, 145, 1990

PHILIPPINES

Danger money

The US Defence Department now feels that urban Filipino guerillas pose more of a threat to a soldier's personal safety than being shot at in war. US service personnel in the Philippines are bemused over the \$110 a month hazardous duty pay allowance they are drawing because of attacks by the New People's Army. This is \$45 more than they would be given if they were in combat.

From Far Eastern Economic Review, Vol 148, No 22 1990

FUNDAMENTALISM

Pacifist intolerance

The Peace Pledge Union, one of Britain's main pacifist organisations, has launched a picket of its own headquarters in London. This is in protest at the repeated support by one of its tenants for the killing of Salman Rushdie. For part of the headquarters is let out to the Muslim Institute which has supported the sending of hit squads from abroad to murder Rushdie.

The Peace Pledge Union does not require that its tenants should be pacifists but it draws the line at those which encourage acts of murder. Although the Muslim Institute has been asked to leave, to date they have not done so. Indeed they have just published a *Muslim Manifesto* urging British Muslims to involve themselves in armed struggle abroad – hardly in line with pacifist views.

From Peace Pledge Union press release

ARMS TRADE

Bargains galore

The end of the Cold War and the peace dividend this is meant to bring has taken on a whole new meaning for arms exports to the Third World. For Thailand is planning to buy 350 M48A5 and 300 M60A1 mainline battle tanks from the US at knockdown prices. Starting prices offered by the US for the second-hand tanks are a bargain \$100,000 for the M48A5 and \$200,000 for the

M60A1. These compare favourably with the \$390,000 paid by the Thais for each of their 60 or so Chinese T69 tanks. The American tanks are being offered on the cheap because of the planned withdrawal of US armoured units from Europe.

From Far Eastern Economic Review, 5 July 1990

WORLD BANK

First class row

The World Bank's internal magazine has published a letter suggesting that the World Bank staff fly business class rather than first class. The letter was written by Dr Irwin, Director of the World Bank's Health Services department. He claimed he had saved the Bank \$1,900 in February and March by travelling business class rather than first class from Washington to East Africa. 'It is wrong,' he wrote, 'that the staff of an institution whose stated goal is the reduction of poverty should be entitled to first-class travel on trips over nine hours.'

Outrage ensued. One senior staff member wrote: 'My family and I will not feel safe again until the Director has been replaced by someone who really cares' Another wrote that this recommendation was 'a chilling statement' and added that an end to first-class travel could lead to an increase in 'post-mission travel-induced strokes'.

Dr Irwin is no longer with the World Bank, having resigned a year before his two-year contract was up.

From World Development Forum, Vol 8 No 12 1990

"endquote"

'He had grown up in a country run by politicians who sent the pilots to man the bombers to kill the babies to make the world safe for children to grow up in.'

Ursula Le Guin

'The feminist tradition abandons the concept of naming enemies and adopts a concept familiar to the nonviolent tradition: naming behaviour that is oppressive, naming abuse of power that is held unfairly and must be destroyed.'

Barbara Deming

SPIES

CIA recruits

Glasnost hasn't reduced recruiting for The Company, according to former agent Verne Lyon, who once headed the CIA base in Cuba. Now he spends his time warning students to stay away from his former employer.

'Right after World War Two, they did not dare come overtly onto campuses,' he says. 'They were far more careful. But today, with a personnel need for up to 3,000 recruits a year, recruitment teams take out full-page adverts in campus newspapers to announce their arrival. They line up with all the other corporations, usually in the spring, to interview mild-to-arch conservative chemists, physicists, photographers, typists, engineers and those with language skills. They are aided by "spotters" – faculty members paid to spot and assess students.'

The CIA claims it has never had anything to do with Lyon. But Lyon asserts that students who do make the CIA grade can expect job security: 'With no vested interest in peace, the agency will try to undermine any peace process.'

From Mother Jones, Vol 15 No 4 1990

ENVIRONMENT

Flower power

What do these plants have in common: rosy periwinkle, *Chondrodendron tomentosum*, foxglove, Indian snakeroot, mandrake, henbane, thornapples, mayapples, yams, meadowsweet and willow bark? Answer: Medications are derived from all of them, relieving the ailments from which we suffer. *Chondrodendron tomentosum*, for example, provides a muscle relaxant helpful to patients facing major surgery.

More than 80 per cent of children with leukemia survive thanks to the chemicals vincristine and vinblastine from the rosy periwinkle. Digoxin from foxgloves regulates heartbeat and is useful to millions of people with heart ailments.

The World Wide Fund for Nature points out that with the destruction of the tropical rain forests: 'Of the estimated 250,000 flowering plants believed to be in existence ... only some 5,000 have been tested exhaustively for their pharmaceutical attributes. Now this vast store of known and potential medicines is under threat (five plants become extinct every day).'

In praise of idleness

An Indian from Ecuador's rainforest visits Europe – and is not greatly impressed. Helena Paul discovers why.

HE explained that he was wearing the head-dress – red, yellow, black and white toucan feathers – so that we would recognize him as he came through the arrivals gate at London's Heathrow Airport. He need not have worried. With his eagle's profile and shoulder-length straight black hair he was the only likely Achuar Indian from Ecuador.

Customs had asked him a lot of questions. Everything about him puzzled them – not least that his baggage for his six-week tour of Europe consisted of an exhibition banner and a small shoulder bag filled with papers.

Luis Vargas is President of the Confederation of Indian Nations of the Ecuadorian Amazon. This includes many former enemies who have decided to bury the hatchet in favour of working together to defend themselves against the oil companies and cattle ranchers, coffee growers and colonists, whose greed threatens their existence. Luis is particularly concerned with defending the rights of the Huarani Indians, as these are the most vulnerable group, having only recently made contact with the outside world.

As with all native peoples, issue number one is land rights. To live in their traditional manner the Ecuadorian Indians need large tracts of undisturbed forest in which to hunt, fish and cultivate their gardens.

But there is a lot of oil in the forest – and that is the problem. The Government regularly carves up the land into concessions which are then sold off to the highest bidder. 'I don't understand this selling of land,' says Luis. 'It's like selling your mother.'

British Gas has a concession in Achuar territory. So a visit by Luis to the British Gas headquarters in London seemed appropriate. No-one was prepared to see him at first. He was advised to put his complaints in writing.

Finally, a Public Relations spokesperson was sent out to deal with this obstinate Indian who would not go away. Luis was unimpressed. He had heard the PR talk before. And besides, the PR man did not have to live in an Achuar village where people were being kept awake day and night by drilling machinery.

What struck Luis most on his trip to Europe was the loneliness of crowded European cities – and the uncaring treatment of the aged and disadvantaged.

Six weeks later I met him in Ecuador. At his home outside Puyo, I could see what he meant as I witnessed the warmth and mutuality of the community in which he and wife lived with their five children, turkeys, chick-

ens, dogs and monkeys. On my first morning I awoke to hear the crackle of a fire being lit and Luis playing his flute.

Luis took me to the offices of the Confederation of Indian Nations, not far from his home. The people gathered there talked about their dreams of setting up an Amazonian University. It would function as a

centre of Indian knowledge and contain a hospital where doctors would work closely with shamans and traditional healers.

These are dreams. For the time being, the people at the Confederation of Nations are working to provide bi-lingual education and primary health care. They are also making a record of traditional practices and knowledge.

We followed a narrow path into the rainforest and Luis's 10-year-old daughter taught me the names of the many fruits that grow freely there. But it was a small agricultural project, set up

by the Indians, that best illustrated how good native people are at protecting their environment – especially compared with the plunderous methods used by the colonists. The latter – mainly urban poor encouraged by the Government to make a new start in the jungle – ruin the fragile soil with their slash-and-burn agriculture, often growing a single cash crop like coffee then moving on. The Indians, on the other hand, plant a mixture of native plants and trees together, selected for their ability to nourish the soil, create shade and leaf litter, hold moisture and lure native animals and birds to return.

Shortly after leaving Ecuador I learned that the Huarani had won the rights to 7,000 square kilometres of their land. However the small print says the titles will be revoked if they interfere with oil or mineral exploration or extraction. To receive their titles from the President of Ecuador, the Huarani were issued with identical shoes and clothes and taken off to Quito. Confederation of Nations representatives were not invited because they were viewed as 'communists and agitators'.

Luis Vargas came to Europe as an ambassador not only for his people – but also for an ideology that is increasingly important in today's world. The Jesuits, when they landed in Ecuador, fired up with missionary zeal, described the Indians there as 'idle'. If idleness is the opposite of over-consumption, pollution and indifference to the poor and elderly, then maybe we in the North could do with a bit more of it...

Helena Paul specializes in the issues of environment and native peoples.

Photo: Sinclair Stammers



I think.

by Martyn Turner

QUIZ



Now we have a kinder, gentler NATO with less need for guns and stuff... will they...



A: beat their swords into plough shares?



B: beat their swords into stocks & shares?

TICK OFF WHERE APPROPRIATE



Starting over: Murphy with Nick Nolte in *Another 48 Hours*.

★ FILM

Eddie Murphy

Eddie Murphy is one of the great disappointments in world popular culture. The world's biggest comic actor, he forms part of the triumvirate of black men at the peak of their particular entertainment industry mountain – Michael Jackson in music and Bill Cosby in television. Like them, he exemplifies a coming of age for black Americans, a role model of power and control who has a cross-cultural appeal to audiences the world over. He is a Golden Child with a Golden Opportunity.

And what has he done with it? Answer: he is squandering his chances, his gifts and his reputation as fast as he can. He has had more chances than any other star. He keeps churning out movies with the charm of a wet turd and yet still has his audiences come clamouring back for more, validating his box-office clout and encouraging ever more outrageous financial demands. At the moment he gets about \$12 million per picture – and is thinking of leaving Paramount because he considers himself underpaid. The funny money he commands is obscene but should not be held against him any more or less than we hold it against any other movie or music celebrity of this magnitude from Mick Jagger to Jack Nicholson (reputed to be on \$40 million to appear in the *Batman* sequel).

Eddie Murphy has to answer more specific charges. He has done nothing to further the cause of black people in general – unless by offering his own success as an example. In that sense his initial blitz onto the screen in Walter Hill's *48 Hours*

when he negotiated a bar full of white racists was misleadingly full of promise. Much more telling was his second film (and still probably his most satisfying) *Trading Places*, in which his black petty thief deplored the immoral excesses of white capitalism but had no qualms about enjoying the mega-wealth it eventually brought him.

But perhaps it is unfair to hold his utter lack of a political perspective against him – again, there are plenty of white stars who are apolitical but lose no credibility as a result (think of Woody Allen). The main charge Eddie Murphy has to answer is that he is wasting his own talent, throwing it away on misogyny and cliché. The man has a great comic gift but has reduced it to a few trademarks – primarily a manic chuckle and a pathetic obsession with the word 'motherfucker'.

Murphy's descent into the qualitative depths has mirrored his ascent into the financial stratosphere and can be charted by watching the two instalments of *Beverly Hills Cop*. The first, hard on the heels of *Trading Places*, was a formula yarn which hedged its bets by adding a healthy dollop of action to its hero's comic charisma. But it was both fun and funny. The sequel came later after Murphy had become a Hollywood god and could exert more control over his material. The result was a thoroughly objectionable, sexist piece of film-making which betrayed Murphy's view of womankind as little more than sexual meat. Not even suggestive of lust, the stream of misogynist words he has poured over all his subsequent films feels like it has a disturbing violence behind it. Funny it ain't.

The more control Murphy has gained, the worse has been the result – culminating in this year's execrable *Harlem Nights*, of which he was writer, director, producer and star. He deserves

to go down in flames but somehow you still have to hope he pulls himself out of his nose-dive. What he needs is a director who can rein back his excesses and help him develop his craft. And who can tell him that abusing and degrading women is about as funny as the redneck jokes about 'niggers' that he would certainly deplore.

★ BOOKS

Colours of a New Day

by various artists (Lawrence & Wishart UK, Pantheon US)

This is the literary equivalent of the Free Mandela concert: a collection of prose and poetry by 34 writers from around the world who have pledged their profits to an ANC cultural project inside South Africa. Perhaps unexpectedly, very few of the contributions are about South Africa or racism – or even about wider political issues. That is largely because few of the pieces have been written specially for the book; in quite a few cases these are not even stories selected from an oeuvre for their relevance but rather excerpts from novels currently in progress.

This has both good and bad effects. On the one hand it means there is a fascinating diversity as you move from a Soweto township through mem-

oirs of Cultural Revolution China to a childhood in an English seaside town. And 34 different views of apartheid might very well not have turned out to be that different.

But on the other hand there is a certain lack of focus which occurs particularly with the excerpts from novels – it is a rare novel whose excerpted few pages can stand as a short story, the construction of which is a very particular art.

The quality is as variable as you would expect as lesser-known writers sit alongside international luminaries like Wole Soyinka from Nigeria, Han Suyin from China, June Jordan from the US, Nadine Gordimer from South Africa, Raymond Williams from the UK and Margaret Atwood from Canada.

Atwood's contribution is perhaps the most successful of all, managing to pull together fragments about a lifelong friendship, about life in the West over three decades and about ecology, into a coherent and evocative short story. This piece alone would be enough to validate the decision to include pieces unrelated to South Africa alongside territory like the Indian writer Vikram Seth's tribute to Biko:

*When Vorster, Kruger, and their rotten
Spawn revert to slime, forgotten,
And time obliterates their base,
Their too uncrazy frame of race,
We will remember one who, chained*



Snapshots from a vivid life, drawn from Father Huddleston's *Picture Book (Kliptown)*. As priest to the black township of Sophiatown before its demolition in 1955 he made friends like Nelson Mandela and Ruth First (later assassinated by South African security forces). Ever since then he has been prominent in the international struggle against apartheid.

*Naked, and coshed to death, maintained
His principles of peace and pride
And taught us dignity as he died.*

Politics ★★★★★
Entertainment ★★★★★

Voices Made Night

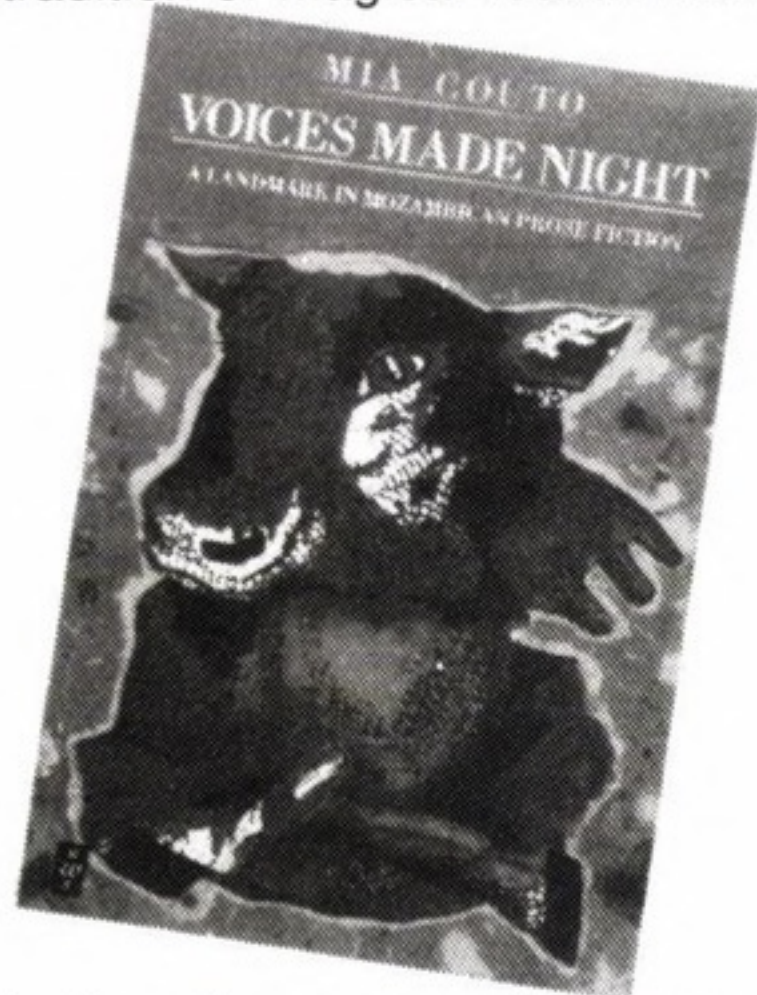
by Mia Couto (Heinemann)

A man tells his wife he is going to start digging her grave. This could be upsetting. She is not dead yet, as she points out. Nor has she immediate plans in that direction. But she takes it philosophically. And after a brief discussion he starts digging.

Suddenly an ox explodes, begins another curious tale in this collection, **Voices Made Night**, by the Mozambican writer Mia Couto. 'It burst without as much as a moo,' he writes. 'In the surrounding grass a rain of chunks and slices feel, as if the fruit and leaves of the ox'. In a third tale a man vomits a live,

talking raven.

These stories are about magic and they are about realism. At first they seem to borrow from the Latin American tradition of magical realism. But



look at them more closely and you see the stories tend to work the opposite way round.

Compare for example magical realist Gabriel Garcia Marquez's description (in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*) of a woman being wafted away by a gust of wind as she is hanging

up her washing. She disappears into the blue, never to be seen again. Nobody is surprised at this – and nor should the reader be. Realism keeps slipping imperceptibly into magic.

In Mia Couto's tales, however, the central event is treated as strange, awesome and magical by the rural peasants who witness it. The ox exploding, for example, must be some kind of divine sign. It is described in surreal terms to the reader. So is the subsequent explosion of the ox-herd. It is only towards the end of the story, when a couple of government soldiers appear on the scene and interpret events, that we learn that this is a mundane affair for war-torn Mozambique. The ox trod on a landmine, laid by South African-backed Renamo rebels.

This technique enables Couto to express the alienation of the most disempowered from the source of their own suffering. It reminds you of the answers of peasants in rural Mozambique who could not

begin to explain or understand why those white people in South Africa should be supporting the 'bandits' to do all these violent, bloody things. It was a mystery to them.

Or, in the words of Mia Couto: 'The most harrowing thing about poverty is the ignorance it has of itself... there exists in nothingness that illusion of plenitude which causes life to stop and voices to become night'.

Voices Made Night is a puzzling and unusual offering from a writer able to combine humour with horror and with beauty – and remain compassionate throughout.

Politics ★★★★★
Entertainment ★★★★★

★ STAR RATING

Excellent	★★★★★
Very good	★★★★
Good	★★★
Fair	★★
Poor	★

Reviews editor: Chris Brazier

CLASSIC

The Price of Coal

... being the book that undermined Britain's monarchy

When I was 14 the comprehensive school I attended was honoured by the fleeting presence of the future King of Britain. It was 1977, the Queen's Silver Jubilee year, and the British populace was no doubt subjected to more Royal visitations in that year than in any other before or since. Nonetheless it seemed triply inappropriate that 'Prince Chick' (as we colloquially nicknamed him) should drop in on us in our vast council estate on the northern edge of Glasgow. First, we saw him as the *English* king-to-be: few children in Scotland are brought up to have much time or patience for the monarchy. Second, ours was a Catholic school and he was destined to be head of a Protestant church. Third, he was rich and we weren't.

As pupils, we became aware of much anxious organization for the visit on the part of the school's senior staff. A hand-picked elite group of sixth-form girls would be presented to the Prince and apparently spent a lot of time being taught how to curtsy. On the day before the event we discovered that the crush hall, where we normally flocked to buy sweets at morning break, had been ruled out of bounds. Crowds of us stood gawping through the windows in disbelief. The hall had been decked out overnight with dozens of vases of white flowers.

I read Barry Hines' **The Price of Coal** some years later and was impressed by the accuracy and the power with which this short novel dramatized and elaborated the complex reaction of a working-class community to this kind of event. The plot is simple. When it is announced that the Prince of Wales is to visit a South Yorkshire colliery as part of the Jubilee celebrations, the Coal Board immediately decides to spend an enormous amount of money on a facelift for the workplace. Hines exploits this situation to stimulate both tremendous amusement and serious political reflection in the reader.

In the first part of the book, called 'Meet the People', the transformation of the colliery is quite surreal. The muckstack is recontoured and grassed over, only for the grass seed to be washed away by a freak shower a week before the visit. All visible parts of the work buildings are smothered in white paint, tubs of flowers suddenly appear from nowhere, and a new sign is placed on the gate with a Latin motto: *E Tenebris Lux* ('Out of the shadows comes the light'). When a brick which is propping open a window proves to be stuck fast, the colliery manager orders it painted the same colour as the window frame so that it will be inconspicuous.

Each of these fantastic innovations provokes comment from the miners and their families, and it is in these exchanges that the book's political message is delivered. Although some of the miners welcome any improvement in their working conditions, others see that a fundamental social principle is at stake. One of the main opponents of the visit voices this plainly: 'If all this fuss is worth making, it's worth making for us. It's us who work here and live here. It's us who sees it every day and it should be our needs that come first, not His.'

The truth of this assertion is graphically demonstrated by the second half of the novel, entitled 'Back to Reality'. As this suggests, the absurd hilarity of preparations for the Prince's visit is here grimly contrasted with a disaster in the pit a fortnight later in which five miners are horrifyingly killed. The implication is that, while massive funds are available for the entertainment of Royalty during a half-hour visit, no corresponding investment is made to ensure the basic physical safety of those who spend their working lives underground. What matters to those in power is the public face, rather than the human price, of coal.

Much fiction about industrial politics tends to highlight the dramatic conflicts which centre on strikes and strikebreaking, sabotage, and clashes between management officials and workers' representatives. **The Price of Coal** achieves the much more difficult feat of exploring and revealing the atrocities of capitalism (dangerous and punishing working conditions, lack of participation by workers in key decisions, vast inequalities of wealth) without recourse to any of these conventional devices. There is very little by way of classical 'class struggle' in the book. The miners and their families are not overly politicized and the only active opposition to the Royal visit which emerges is some red graffiti on a canteen wall ('Scargill Rules OK!') which is soon removed. Hines' description of the miners also lacks any pious 'sons of toil' sentimentality: much of their conversation is vulgar and bluntly sexist, and some display a distinctly slapdash and lazy attitude to work. But it is unnecessary for the reader to sympathize wholly with the book's characters for Hines to achieve his political objectives.

When I look back at my own experience of a Royal visit in the light of this novel I can understand more fully the sense of smouldering discontent in the locality about our entertaining 'Prince Chick'. There were, fortunately, no disasters after the Prince's departure. The visit itself was a notably brief affair. A group of us watched the Prince's arrival in a limousine from a second-floor Maths class. An observatory silence fell on us as His Majesty walked across the school yard and was broken by our teacher saying, very volubly, one word: 'Parasite'. Few of us then knew exactly what the word meant but the animus with which it was uttered seemed to sum up all of our feelings.

Macdonald Daly

The Price of Coal by Barry Hines.

Bangladesh

Photo: Laura/UNICEF



Leader President Hussain Mohammad Ershad
Economy GNP per capita US\$160 (US \$18,530) Between 1986 and 1987 per-capita income fell from \$135 to \$128. About 80 per cent of aid projects and 60 per cent of the domestic budget are financed from external sources.

Monetary unit: Taka

Major exports: jute and jute products, shellfish, garments, tea, sugar, cement and leather goods destined for the US, the EC and Japan. Imports are capital and consumer goods, food and oil. Agriculture is based on rice, tea, potatoes, pulses, tobacco and fishing.

People 115 million (UN estimate January 1990)

Health Infant mortality 118 per 1,000 (US 10 per 1,000)

Culture Bengali with some minorities living mainly in the hill areas.

Religion: Islam (87%) with around 10% Hindus and minorities of Buddhists, Christians and Animists.

Language: Bangla (Bengali)

Sources: *State of the World's Children 1990*; *Asia Yearbook 1988* and information supplied by the author.

Last profiled in February 1980

Two hundred years ago eastern Bengal (now Bangladesh) was prosperous, producing fine silks and muslins and abundant rice. Lying in the delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers, it has some of the world's richest soil. Yet today Bangladesh is one of the world's poorest countries, receiving thousands of tons of free grain from the United Nations and the West.

Bangladesh's inability to feed itself is partly explained by its climate. A series of cyclones, tidal waves and heavy floods in the 1980s destroyed crops and homes. Since well over 80 per cent of the population live in rural areas and rely on agriculture these blows were devastating.

But political violence has also played a major part in arresting its development. Bangladesh was born out of violence. During the War of Liberation in 1971 over two million people of what was then East Pakistan died fighting for independence. Indian military assistance was required to overcome the Pakistan army which carried out some of the worst atrocities of

the twentieth century.

Yet the energy and enthusiasm which characterized the Bangladeshi struggle against Pakistan has been dissipated in a short history of political ineptitude, inefficient administration and corruption. These failings saw two national leaders, Sheikh Mujib and President Ziaur, die at the hands of the military which has since been demanding a constitutional role in government. The present leader, Lt-Colonel Ershad, came to power in a bloodless military coup in 1982.

All previous administrations whether those of colonial Britain, autocratic Pakistan or independent Bangladeshi have recognized that land ownership is the key issue. Since the British Partition of India in 1947 all governments have promised to halt the growth in numbers of landless people. Yet today the official statistic is 62 per cent, with many observers claiming it should be nearer 75 per cent.

Absence of alternative work means that ownership of land assumes life-and-death proportions, determining not only whether your children will be educated but how many of them will survive. Landlessness dooms people to poverty.

President Ershad's land-reform policy is radical on paper. It aims to distribute government-held land to the landless; to ensure that sharecroppers who till the land of the rich get a fair share of the profits; and to fix a fair daily minimum wage for agricultural labourers.

If it works without creating a new system of rural patronage to be dispensed by the rich and powerful, the Bangladesh economy will change for the better. But the nagging doubt for Bangladeshis is whether President Ershad has the moral conviction and political strength to carry out these reforms.

Jim Monan

At a glance

***** Excellent
 **** Good
 *** Fair
 ** Poor
 * Appalling

INCOME DISTRIBUTION *

Urban rich own most land and industry
 1980: *

SELF-RELIANCE *

Aid dependence increases annually
 1980: *

POSITION OF WOMEN *

Women still treated as domestic labour by male relatives
 1980: *

POLITICS

Fair elections have been held
 1980

LITERACY *

Still dreadful at 29% (40% for men, 14% for women)
 1980: *

FREEDOM ***

Relatively good but opposition leaders 'house arrested'.
 1980: **

LIFE EXPECTANCY **

Slowly improving at 51 years (US 75 years)
 1980: *

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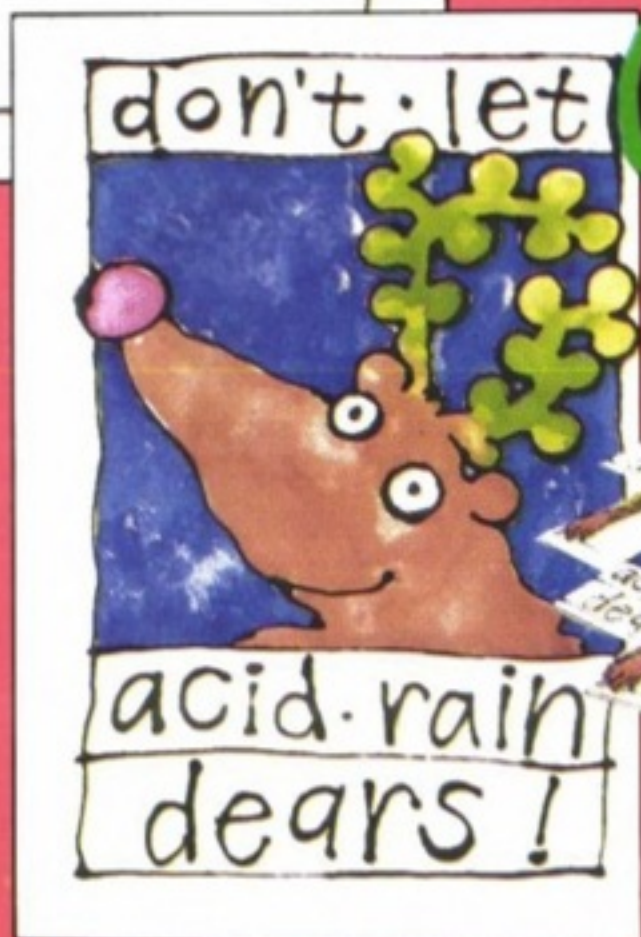
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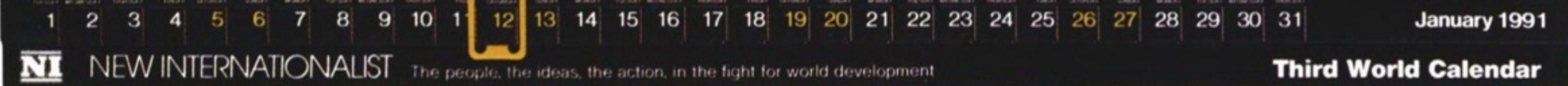
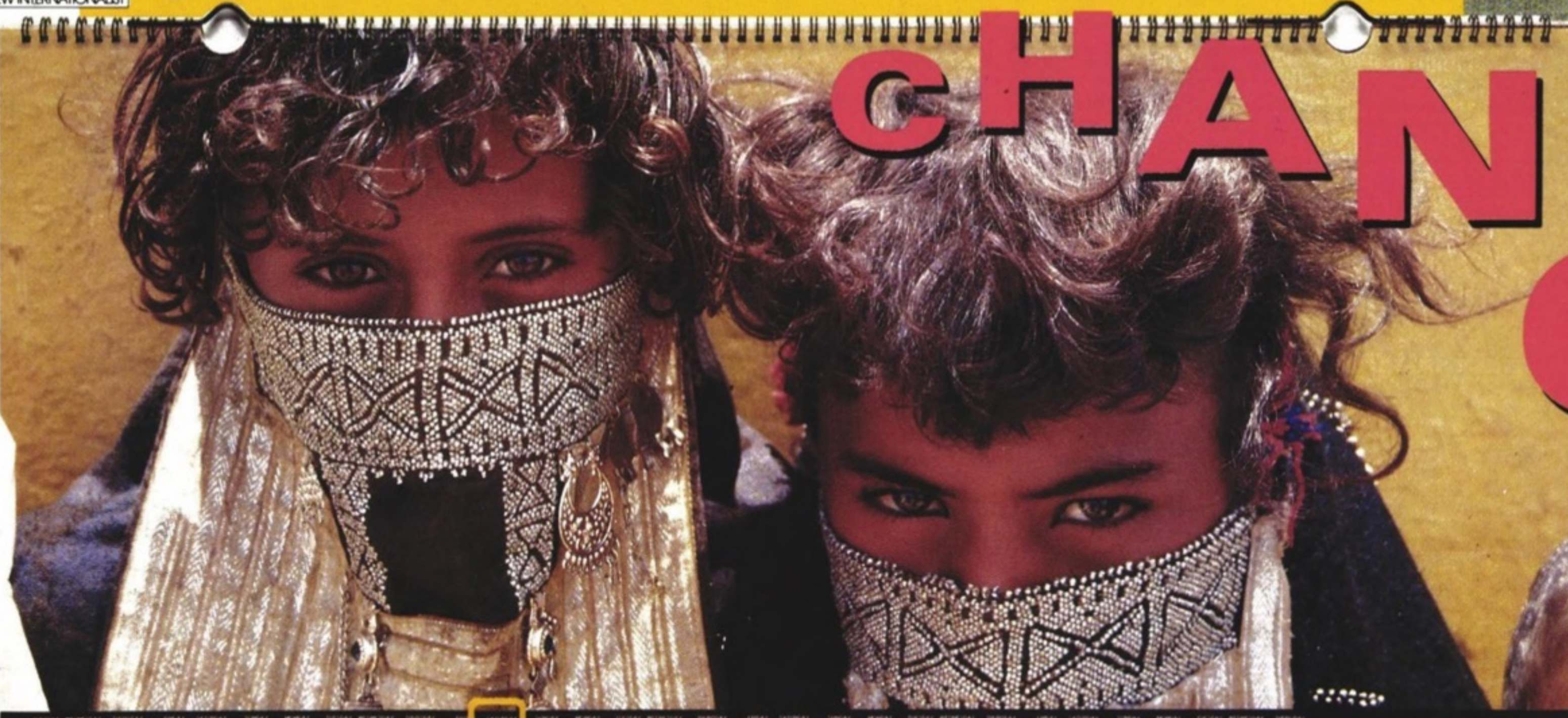
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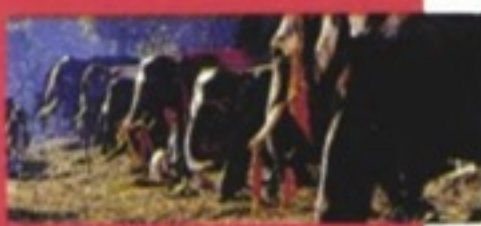


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